Leveraging Mississippi Teacher Access to Technology
To Accelerate Student Literacy

Mississippi leads the way for other states by connecting each classroom teacher with a computer and the internet. While this commitment to bringing the power of information into the classroom is critical, using this technology to cause real learning gains is a complex challenge which requires a planned, systematic, and continuous effort. We offer a system of professional development, student interactive curriculum, continuously supportive instructional tools that enable the teacher to orchestrate effective and engaging learning. We want to work with the educators in Mississippi to provided professional development, innovative interactive literacy instruction and a supportive system to assist teachers in using technology and the internet to accelerate student literacy.

We propose to deliver a Mississippi Teacher Technology Integration Assessment available to all in-service and pre-service teachers in Mississippi and a significant literacy instructional pilot comprised of professional development and student curriculum for 600 Mississippi teachers – 5% of all Mississippi elementary school teachers.

Students should enjoy learning and grow in self-esteem as they learn. We have chosen a range of programs to ensure this outcome. To achieve an effective implementation, we propose a cooperative planning effort with the Mississippi districts and schools and ongoing support from our project managers, master teachers, systems engineers, and external evaluators. Progress reports will enable ongoing management and will support grant applications.

The single most important factor in the student's school experience is the teacher. We support the teachers first—with effective and accessible professional development and teaching resources to make them more effective in the classroom. We use technology and assessment to provide teachers with the means to engage students, to individualize instruction, to provide diverse educational programs, to enable communication and collaboration, and to report to administrators and parents.

To enhance the skills of teachers, first they must <u>know</u> *what they know*. TeacherUniverse *AssessOnline* measures a teacher's understanding of computer and other digital media operations, applications and of appropriate integration of technology into the standards-based classroom. Assessment plays a key role in diagnosing what needs to be learned, and quantifying the learning results from professional development. Our assessments assess each participant's ability to integrate technology with instruction and application proficiency before and after training. Reports are generated and accessed via the Web, giving administrators and participants, immediate feedback.

AssessOnline is designed to identify teachers' technology strengths and learning needs, thereby ensuring professional development tailored to the teacher's specific skill level. *AssessOnline* diagnoses a wide range of teacher technology skills, ranging from ability to integrate technology within the curriculum to scales measuring proficiency with specific software packages. The assessment tool automatically "adapts" to the skill level of the individual test taker, ensuring accurate measurement in the least time possible.

Unlike many "assessments," which are in truth teacher self-surveys, *AssessOnline* requires teachers to demonstrate their skills through a wide variety of question types, including simulated software use, classroom scenarios, hot-spot, sequencing, and multiple choice. The assessment content was designed and refined by national experts and TU's staff of experienced teachers and technology coordinators, and the validity was confirmed by testing and our independent Advisory Board of technology and assessment experts.

The state of Georgia currently administers *AssessOnline* to all pre-service and in-service teachers who wish to place out of required recertification courses in technology. Reports are gathered by school, district and state in order to appraise progress toward meaningful use of technology in classrooms.

Our proposed program for Mississippi includes the customization of *AssessOnline* for the state of Mississippi, the availability of the test across the state for all pre-service and in-service teachers. Results from the assessment can be used to strategize staff development for teachers.

The second part of our proposal consists of pilot staff development enriched literacy programs for 5% of the elementary teachers in the state. Students' learning will only be transformed if teachers are given the appropriate resources and training. Staff Development plays a key role in addressing the gap between teacher preparation and student learning. Best Practice Networks goal is to improve student learning through empowering teachers with technology-based, instructional tools and effective staff development. By first addressing teacher technology professional development needs student achievement gains are obtainable.

At the conclusion of *AssessOnline*, the Mississippi Literacy Pilot teachers are placed in an appropriate learning path in *IntegrateOnline*. Our self-paced, interactive courses enable busy teachers to train at their own pace, whenever and wherever they have access to a computer with Internet connection. Teachers immerse themselves in learning how computers and multimedia technology can be incorporated into the classroom through standards-based, technology-rich instruction. This design ensures that each self-paced course is streamlined and optimized for each teacher. Our online professional development courses also enable teachers to communicate with each other via Listservs and Bulletin Boards. Other tools include: Online Lesson Planner, Nation Standards Locator, Personal Online Portfolio, and Online Application for CEU credits.

Upon completion of the staff development and training, teachers take our comprehensive and course-specific Post Assessment, which enabling them and their administrators to measure improvement, and comprehension, at the teacher, school level, district or national level. Teacher Universe Learning Tools allow teachers to use a Web-based model for communication, collaboration, and interactive learning. Community Resources, such as our lesson planner and correlator, can be used to construct online or off-line lesson plans, all correlated to nation and local standards.

IntegrateOnline Online Features/Functions

Through hands-on, project-based training, Teacher Universe's professional development courses help educators infuse technology into their curriculum. Teachers master real-world applications, such as Microsoft Word and Excel, while learning how to implement their new skills in the creation of technology-rich lesson plans. Teacher Universe's professional development courses include:

Courses	Features of Teacher Universe Courses
Integrate Online *Digital Media for Teachers of Young Children* *Teaching Reading: Using Destination Reading* *Early Literacy*	**AssessOnline** –pre- and post- assessments generate customized learning paths and detailed online reports. **Real Interactions** –practice of actual application skills **Self-Paced Learning** – teachers learn at their own pace. **Multiple Media** – audio and test, rich interactions, visual demonstrations, hands-on projects, lesson-plan creation,

IntegrateOnline, our classroom scenario-based, hands-on professional development program teaches the use of electronic lesson planning to integrate district-mandated curriculum, including activities from Riverdeep. Teachers then share lesson plans with each other, building a district archive of best-practice local lesson plans.

Next, we create an engaged and supportive learning environment. Teachers are challenged in integrating new technology-based lessons with their existing curriculum. The Teacher Universe system of instruction and lesson management complements and supports the effective implementation of the Riverdeep *Destination Reading* program. It is recognized and accepted that good teachers typically

employ a variety of instructional methods and tools to teach early literacy development. Experts in the field of reading, as well as classroom teachers, advocate a balanced approach to reading instruction. Not all teachers come to schools fully conversant in comprehensive reading instructional methods. The **Destination Reading** student curriculum provides those teachers with approaches to reading supported by activities, tutorials and assessments and modeling of best practice instruction.

Riverdeep has developed an online professional development program to assist the teacher in using the full functionality of the comprehensive and versatile **Destination Reading** student curriculum. This online professional development offering and "just-in-time" coaching enables all teachers, regardless of previous training in specific instructional approaches before, to offer their students a mix of learning experiences.   The Reading Professional Development Series helps teachers to use the innovative electronic **Destination Reading** interactive courses. These online. interactive teacher training courses for Pre Kindergarten through 3rd grade will increase usage, satisfaction, and student success with the program. They also serve as a tool for instructor-led training.

Self-Paced Learning & Adaptivity: A key strength of the Teacher Universe Professional Development Management System is assessment and subsequent adaptivity of the corresponding courses. A short assessment is given to the the user before entering the Reading courses, providing teachers with an individualized learning path throughout the course – based on what the teacher already knows and does not know - about reading instruction. Teachers move through the course at their own pace, and in their own style.   The assessment helps make learning most efficient for time-starved teachers.

Interactivity & Multimedia The Reading Professional Development Series includes a wide range of multimedia features such as audio narration, written text, multiple layers of help, extension ideas, and animation. Use of multimedia helps to fully engage users with a variety of learning styles, as well as reduce fear for new technology users. Highly interactive lessons will lead teachers into Reading instruction scenarios, and hands-on use of the Destination Reading products.

Reporting Detailed reports provide teachers with the understanding of what they know and what they need to know about teaching Reading and using Destination Reading in their classroom. Administrative reports allow school leaders to track their teachers understanding of Reading instruction. Reports also provide accurate and uniform accountability measures for the school or district's professional development program as a whole.

Project-Based & Practical: **Destination Reading** and Teacher Universe **IntegrateOnlien and Digital Media for the Classroom** help teachers understand how to build technology-rich reading lessons for their students, as well as align their lessons to national and state standards in a less time-consuming manner. The hands-on, project-based approach of the courses motivates teachers to use the products more often, as they understand and create practical tools to use in their classroom.

National reading experts created our K-3 **Destination Reading** **program** featuring state of the art instructional methods in engaging multimedia lessons with assignment and tracking capabilities. This program is remarkable in the quality of its instruction and its usefulness for whole group instruction, small group collaboration as well as individual reinforcement, practice and remediation.   Learners are explicitly taught phonics, decoding, and comprehension skills. **Destination Reading** provides careful sequencing of reading and writing skill development so that each new skill builds upon prior skill learning. Multiple learning styles are accommodated and exercised. With **Destination Reading,** the teacher can be sure that each student will be properly instructed, in the right order, at their own pace, as they learn this most fundamental literacy skill set.

Destination Reading **Student Interactive Curriculum**
A child can use Destination Reading every single day for five years—from Pre Kindergarten to 3rd
grade and do something new each time. One path to reading doesn't suit all students. **Destination Reading** was designed with flexibility so every child can succeed, *right from the start.* With all the divergent backgrounds, learning styles and preschool experiences in today's classrooms, every child can't

follow the same route to reading. Because it is the most comprehensive, research-based program of its kind, *Destination Reading* enables all children to achieve reading success.

A research-based instructional approach that balances phonics instruction and reading-for-meaning, *Destination Reading* provides the richest variety of text possible, ranging from familiar stories and multicultural folktales to magazine and encyclopedia-style articles, endearing characters who evolve with students as they mature from kindergartners to third graders, a wealth of entertaining activities, songs and word games that keep children motivated, on-task and eager to return to the program for something new each day.

Destination Reading meets the needs of today's diverse classrooms with:

- An entire unit devoted to emergent literacy, because some youngsters enter school without a fundamental awareness of the essential concepts and functions of print
- The widest assortment of age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction text styles, because research shows different text styles appeal to different types of learners
- Exploration activities and traditional question-answer exercises, because some students learn by doing and others learn by being asked
- Creative assignments and explicit instruction, because some children like to forge new paths and others prefer to follow directions

The importance of a rich variety of text
Some early readers thrive on fanciful stories; others prefer non-fiction. Ultimately, all children must acquire the ability to "read-to-learn." If students are introduced to a rich variety of text from the time they first begin to read, they will be comfortable "textual learners" throughout their lives.

Destination Reading **includes more text styles than any other reading program of its kind:**

- Familiar stories
- Multicultural folktales, fairytales, fables, myths
- Tall tales, including new ones and retelling of old ones
- Original fiction, including narrative, historic, adventure, realistic, de-codeable, diary and journal
- Poems, rhymes, songs and jingles
- Encyclopedia-style articles
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Brochures, packaging and other commercial text
- Recipes and similar procedural text
- Schedules and other tabular or graphically presented text
- Instructional, technical and informational text

*Destination Reading***: Curriculum at a glance**

- **Pre Kindergarten and Kindergarten** — Fundamental print concepts; alphabetic principles; phonemic awareness; phonics; three-letter words; early reading
- **First grade** — Continued phonics and phonemic awareness; automatic word recognition; vocabulary; comprehension strategies; narrative fiction and informational text; decodable texts; writing activities
- **Second grade** — Comprehension; advanced phonics; word study; elements of fiction; elements of non-fiction; writing; early grammar.

- **Third grade** — Advanced continuation of second-grade topics plus research skills; reading for task-related purposes; reading graphics-based text

Designed as a balanced, researched-based reading program, Destination Reading fully conforms to today's research-focused funding requirements. The program was developed with guidance from some of the nation's leading reading experts, as well as classroom teachers and young children themselves.

The Research	Destination Reading
Research shows that children who enter school without a fundamental understanding of print are at risk of falling behind their classmates in reading proficiency.	Destination Reading is the only program of its kind with an entire unit devoted to emergent literacy.
Research shows a balanced reading approach is essential to creating a meaningful literacy experience for all types of learners.	Destination Reading uses a carefully structured whole/part/whole approach to reading instruction that includes both phonics and authentic text.
Research shows some children learn through explicit instruction and others through personal discovery.	Destination Reading has a mix of focused task-oriented activities and open-ended exploration activities.
Research shows children learn to read from a variety of text styles.	Destination Reading includes more text styles than any other reading program so that every child has an opportunity to succeed.

Serving state and federal standards

The scope and sequence of Destination Reading has been determined by carefully reviewing state and federal standards for reading instruction. These standards have been augmented by current research on best practices for reading instruction. Destination Reading meets the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and complies with Title I funding requirements.

We provide an end-to-end solution that is not available anywhere else – assessment of teacher's skills statewide and instruction for a significant pilot group in technology integration and interactive literacy instruction. Providing teachers with a solid foundation in technology use in the classroom enables then to use the literacy curriculum to greater effect. It also ultimately saves teachers time and enhances their own satisfaction as well as students' learning.

We are eager to begin work with the state of Mississippi.