

# Florida Center for Reading Research

Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2

## What is Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2?

*Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2 (Putting Reading First)* is a Professional Development reading course developed by Scholastic Red Professional Development for kindergarten through second grade teachers. *Putting Reading First* is delivered in a blended format combining seven Internet sessions with face-to-face meetings. The online delivery allows participants the flexibility of completing the sessions at their convenience. The in-person meetings add a collaborative dimension to the course by fostering the community of learners as teachers gather to share thoughts, observe facilitator demonstrations of teaching strategies, and demonstrate strategies themselves. The time line for completing *Putting Reading First* is approximately six to eight weeks.

Developing educator's understanding of how the five components of reading affect early reading instruction is the goal of *Putting Reading First*. Although a scope and sequence is not included, clear objectives and a detailed course outline are provided. The seven on-line sessions of the course cover the following content areas: Introduction, Building Blocks of Reading, Alphabet Recognition and Phonemic Awareness, The Basics of Phonics and Decoding, Building Toward Fluency, Role of Vocabulary-Building, Comprehension is Taught Not Caught, and Using Books in the Classroom. Each session has a self-paced format with a three-step process. Step 1 is called Learn and provides the content for each session. Step 2 is titled Apply and it extends the learning process through strategies, lessons, and resources. Step 3, named Check, is the informal assessment of the content presented in each session. These assessment questions must be answered before access to the following session is allowed (correct answers with short explanations for incorrect responses are provided). Each topic combines the text with Red TV, a fifteen to twenty minute interactive multimedia and graphics video. These videos include presentations of lecture bursts, classroom teaching demonstrations, and teaching strategies. A CD-ROM is provided with the course. This CD contains all the video and large media files and can be used in place of slow internet connections. Each session also includes the following links that provide ideas to help teachers differentiate instruction and communicate with families: English Language Learners, Special Education, Content, Technology, Family Engagement, and Advanced Learners.

The Red Toolkit is a hyperlink that provides access to the following resources: *Ask an Expert* is an online discussion board for teachers and facilitators to communicate; *My Journal* is an individual teacher's personal online journal; *Glossary* provides clear, research-based definitions; *Correlations* connect the content in the course to Florida's Sunshine Standards; *District Note* is a place where school districts can deliver customized messages and information to teachers; *Resources* provide participants with professional articles and support materials.

Program materials include the CD-ROM and handbooks for the teachers, reading coaches and principals. The teachers receive a binder for organizing online downloads and resources. The Red Facilitator Handbook for coaches provides everything needed to support a group of teachers taking this course, including materials for four, two-hour workshops.



The principal's guide provides tools for observing reading classrooms and includes background on the research base and content of *Putting Reading First*. The materials are well organized and error free. However, portions of the audio and facial expressions of the presenters on "Red TV" are not synchronized. Consultants serve as "e-mentors" to Red participants by offering ongoing phone, e-mail, and online bulletin board consultation. These consultants provide support for teachers when they begin to apply the new research-based reading strategies in their classrooms. Individual teachers who purchase this course rely on these online experts to help them with content and classroom application questions.

*Putting Reading First* can be purchased by individual teachers and schools or by larger groups such as districts or states. Scholastic Red provides specific information concerning the resources (personnel, financial, and technological) necessary for their customers to successfully access the program. Scholastic Red will customize their program, to fit the needs of the customer. Most common are implementations where Scholastic consultants train local coaches onsite, before the course has begun. The Scholastic consultants then offer support to those coaches in their role as a facilitator. As facilitators these local leaders can then work directly with teachers who are taking the course, in their classrooms, providing observations, demonstrations, feedback, and coaching. The facilitator role can also be fulfilled by online experts who provide guidance, by a volunteer within a cohort of teachers, and by "virtual" workshops. In the case of state or regional implementations a "super" Red facilitator can be trained and provided with additional resources and support to train school-based facilitators within the state or region. Upon completion of the course, Scholastic offers a certificate that documents participation for professional development credit. Scholastic Red provides two documents that connect *Putting Reading First* to the Florida Reading Endorsement Competencies. The more detailed document provides a clear matrix that crosswalks *Putting Reading First* with each of the competencies for the Florida Reading Endorsement.

### How is *Putting Reading First in Your Classroom* aligned with Reading First?

*Putting Reading First in Your Classroom* includes a module on each of the five critical components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Even though Reading First standards are specifically for kindergarten through third grade classrooms, most of the strategies and lessons from *Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2* can be adapted to third grade classrooms. Included in the course objectives is an overview of understanding, applying, and assessing the research provided on the five critical components of reading instruction. The online supplemental material and resources help provide the deep knowledge base that is offered in the program.

Phonemic awareness, alphabet recognition, and understanding the stages of reading development are the focus of The Building Blocks of Reading session. The role alphabet recognition and phonemic awareness play in the success of early reading programs, learning the stages of reading development, recognizing and recounting four types of phonemic awareness tasks (rhyme and alliteration, oddity tasks, oral blending, oral segmentation), and modeling a phonemic manipulation lesson are included as objectives in this session.

The session on phonics emphasizes explicit and systematic phonics instruction. Participants learn how to teach both a blending and dictation lesson, and how to identify and use decodable text for effective phonics instruction. In addition, a lesson requiring participants to practice teaching a phonics-blending lesson encourages self-confidence in teaching this skill.

The link between fluency and comprehension is emphasized in the fluency session. Objectives include explaining the factors influencing the acquisition of fluency and the development of strategies for increasing fluency. Activities such as learning to administer an Oral Fluency Assessment and teaching a lesson on high-frequency words provide participants with the skills they need to implement these techniques into their classrooms.

The objectives in the vocabulary session are: increasing awareness of the connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension, learning ideas for creating a language rich classroom environment, mastering techniques for increasing vocabulary, using direct instruction and context clues, and learning to build oral language using a semantic web.

Understanding that the goal of reading instruction is to increase reading comprehension and learning to implement techniques and strategies proven to increase comprehension, are the objectives in the comprehension session. Strategies include learning to use oral and written retellings to check comprehension, teaching students to use graphic organizers, modeling questioning techniques, teaching story elements, and teaching techniques for active reading and self-monitoring.

Using Books in the Classroom emphasizes the importance of incorporating all appropriate genres and types of books into the curriculum. Stressing the value of matching books to children's instructional and independent reading levels, and methods for doing so, is the focus of the final session of *Putting Reading First in Your Classroom*.

A primary focus of the Reading First Initiative is improving teacher knowledge and practice in the area of assessment by the use of valid and reliable assessments for screening, monitoring, and diagnosing student skills. Although *Putting Reading First* does not include a separate component on assessment, it includes strategies to assist teachers in informal assessment of student progress; self-assessment tools are also suggested for student use.

## Research Support for Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2



*Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2* was first implemented in the fall of 2002. There is no empirical research available on *Putting Reading First* professional development at this time. While evidence of efficacy through experimental studies has not been established, the content of the program is consistent with current reading research.

## Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2*:

- Materials are appealing and user friendly.
- Scholastic customizes the implementation of *Putting Reading First* to meet the needs of the consumer.

Weaknesses of *Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2*:

- Although an assessment component to determine participants' acquisition of content knowledge is included in the program, the standards for achievement are minimal.

## Which Florida districts have schools that implement *Putting Reading First in Your Classroom, Grades K-2*?

Palm Beach

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## For More Information

<http://www.scholasticred.com/>

## References



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