Reading Initiatives in Florida: Possible Roles for Volunteers

Dr. Joseph K. Torgesen

Florida State University and
The Florida Center for Reading Research

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Just Read, Florida! is Governor Bush’s reading initiative in Florida.

It is a “cradle to grave” initiative with four elements:

- Parents and families
- Communities and businesses
- Readiness community
- Educators

www.justreadflorida.com
Resources for Parents

Just Read, Families!
• Calendar of reading activities
• Kids Page
• DOS FLYP program
• Recommended reading lists
• Justreadfamilies.com

Families Building Better Readers
• For parents of 3rd grade struggling readers
• 20 cities in state 03-04
• Blueprints in English, Spanish, Haitian-Creole, French, Portuguese
Basic Premises of Just Read, Florida!

All but a very small percentage of children can be taught to be successful readers.

Prevention of reading problems is far more effective and cost efficient than remediation.
Reading stimulates general cognitive growth—particularly verbal skills.

Support your local brain cells
READ.
Basic Premises of Just Read, Florida!

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Prevention of reading problems is far more effective and cost efficient than remediation.

Most reading failure can be prevented by making some important changes in the way we work with children in our schools.
Reading First is the Federally Funded K-3 component of Just Read, Florida!

Approximately $50 million per year for six years spent in three broad areas
The three major spending categories for Reading First grants to schools and districts:

Professional development for teachers
Also for paraprofessionals, volunteers, and parents

Purchase and implementation of assessments

Curriculum materials – including software and books for libraries
Reading First’s model for preventing reading failure in grades K-3: Three big Ideas

1. Increase the quality and consistency of instruction in every K-3 classroom.

2. Conduct timely and valid assessments of reading growth to identify struggling readers.

3. Provide high quality, intensive interventions to help struggling readers catch up with their peers.
What is the big problem that Reading First is trying to address?

1. Far too many poor children are not becoming proficient readers within the current system.

2. Far too many minority children are not becoming proficient readers within the current system.

3. We want to dramatically improve reading outcomes in schools that serve high proportions of poor and minority students.

Currently have approx. 400 schools in 32 districts participating in Reading First.
Right now, all over the United States, we are leaving too many children behind in reading—2003 NAEP results.

And, a large share of those children come from poor and minority homes.

Percent of Students Performing Below Basic Level - 37%

- White: 26% (Poor: 56%)
- Black: 61% (Non-poor: 25%)
- Hispanic: 57% (Non-poor: 25%)
- Poor: 56% (Non-poor: 23%)
Three main reasons children struggle in learning to read (NRC report)

1. Lack of preparation, or lack of talent that interferes with ability to understand the alphabetic principal (phonics) and learn to read words accurately and fluently

2. Lack of preparation, or lack of talent in the general verbal domain (i.e. vocabulary) that limits comprehension of written material

3. Low motivation to learn or behavior problems that interfere with learning in the classroom
Research indicates that students need to acquire skills and knowledge in at least five main areas in order to become proficient readers.

**Five critical components:**

- **Phonemic Awareness**
  - Identifying words accurately and fluently

- **Phonics**

- **Fluency**
  - Constructing meaning once words are identified

- **Vocabulary**

- **Comprehension strategies**
What is Phonemic Awareness?
Phonemic Awareness - “ability to identify, think about, and manipulate the individual sounds in words”

Having phonemic awareness means that you understand that words are made up of small bits of sound, and it also implies a growing ability to identify individual sounds in words.
In the English language, all spoken words are constructed from about 44 different phonemes.

fog
In the English language, all spoken words are constructed from about 44 different phonemes.

\[ f - o - g \]

golf
In the English language, all spoken words are constructed from about 44 different phonemes:

\[ f - o - g \]

\[ g - o - l - f \]

The English writing system is based on the discovery that we can represent words using marks (letters) to stand for the sounds in words.
Why is phonemic awareness important in learning to read?

Children must understand that the words in their oral language are composed of small segments of sound in order to comprehend the way that language is represented by print.

Without at least emergent levels of phonemic awareness, the rationale for learning individual letter sounds, and “sounding out” words is not understandable.

Without PA, “Phonics” doesn’t make sense
Measuring Phonemic Awareness -

Easy items

What is the first sound in *man*?

If you put these sounds together, what word do they make - *f - a - n*?

Easy items

Tell me all the different sounds in the word *scratch*? *S-k-r-a-ch* Stress? *S-t-r-e-s-s*?

What word is left if you say split, without saying */l/*? *spit*
What is “Phonics”?

It is a kind of **knowledge**
Which letters are used to represent which phonemes

It is a kind of **skill**
Pronounce this word...

blit fratchet
Why is it important for children to acquire good phonemic decoding skills (phonics) early in reading development?

Because learning to read involves everyday encounters with words the child has never before seen in print.

Phonemic analysis provides the most important single clue to the identity of unknown words in print.
Facts about reading from scientific research:

To be a fluent reader, a child must be able to recognize most of the words in a passage “by sight”

Children must correctly identify words 3-8 times before they become “sight words”

Children must make accurate first guesses when they encounter new words, or the growth of their “sight word vocabulary” will be delayed—they will not become fluent readers.
Facts about reading from scientific research:

The most efficient way to make an “accurate first guess” of the identity of a new word is:

First, do phonemic analysis and try an approximate pronunciation

Then, close in on the exact right word by selecting a word with the right sounds in it, that also makes sense in the passage
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words likely to be encountered for the first time in first grade</th>
<th>animal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>faster</td>
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<tr>
<td>happy</td>
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<td>never</td>
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<td>time</td>
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<td>sleep</td>
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<td>rabbit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Words likely to be encountered for the first time in second grade</td>
<td>amaze</td>
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________the middle ______, it was the
_______for a _________ to wear his full
set of ______ whenever he
_________ in _________ - even in times
of_______! When a _________ believed
he was ______ friends, he would
_______ his ________. This ______
of ____________ showed that the
_______ felt _________ and safe.
During the middle ages, it was the custom for a knight to wear his full set of armor whenever he appeared in public — even in times of peace! When a knight believed he was among friends, he would remove his helmet. This symbol of friendship showed that the knight felt welcome and safe.
Poor children come to school less acquainted with the alphabet and less sensitive to the sounds in words.

We tested children’s sensitivity to the sounds in words in a large group of middle class (250) and poor (170) children.

Children were 2, 3, 4, and 5 when tested.
SES Differences in Phonological Sensitivity

1. Children from lower SES backgrounds have significantly less well developed phonological sensitivity.

2. Children from lower SES backgrounds experience significantly less growth in these skills during the preschool years compared to their higher SES counterparts.
Diversity in knowledge of letter names

- Bottom 10%: 2
- Next 10%: 5
- Next 10%: 6
- Next 10%: 6
- Next 10%: 6
- Top 25%: 26
Individual differences in vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to children’s knowledge of the meaning of words.

There are enormous differences in pre-school language experience that dramatically affect children’s vocabulary by the time they enter school.

First-grade children from higher SES groups know about twice as many words as lower SES children.

Children differ from one another in the breadth, depth, and fluency of their word knowledge.
Language

Meaningful Differences
in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children

Betty Hart & Todd R. Risley

Foreword by Lois Bloom
Hart and Risley (1995) conducted a longitudinal study of children and families from three groups:

- Professional families
- Working-class families
- Families on welfare
Hart & Risley compared the mean number of interactions initiated per hour in each of the three groups.
Interactions

Hart & Risley also compared the mean number of minutes of interaction per hour in the three groups.
Cumulative Language Experiences

Cumulative Words Per Hour

- Welfare
- Working
- Professional
Cumulative Language Experiences

Different words used per hour

- Welfare
- Working
- Professional
Cumulative Language Experiences

Cumulative Words Spoken to Child
(in millions)

Age of child
(in months)

- Professional
- Working
- Welfare
“soft bigotry of low expectations”
One of our biggest challenges in Reading First is going to involve finding the resources to provide the extra interventions and extra instruction required by many of our children who come to school already behind in important pre-literacy skills.
Diversity in Preparation and Ability for Learning to Read

Diversity of Educational Response
Diversity in Preparation and Ability for Learning to Read

Diversity of Educational Response

100

70

30
A range of methods can be used to provide immediate, intensive interventions

- Small group work with the classroom teacher
- Small group work with a reading resource (Title 1) teacher
- Small group work with a special education teacher
- Small group work with an aide or paraprofessional
- Individual work with computer assisted instruction
- 1:1 work with volunteers
- 1:1 work with classroom or cross age peers
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Elements that help to improve the effectiveness of volunteer’s work with students

- Consistent supervision and support at the school level
- Well structured activities and materials to use
- Even brief training in the use of the materials
- A commitment to work several times per week with the same child or children
Some important ways that volunteers could contribute effectively to Florida’s reading initiatives:

Help to increase children’s vocabularies in preschool by using a simple technique like dialogic reading.
Dialogic reading techniques guide the parent or teacher to engage in “dialogue” about the pictures and stories in books.

Dialogic reading is based on the idea that “How we read to children is as important as how frequently we read to them.”
Dialogic Reading - Level 1

Requires books with lots of colorful, interesting pictures
  Ask questions about objects pictured in the book
    avoid “yes”-“no” questions, or pointing questions
Follow a child’s answer with another question

Help when needed
Repeat what the child says
Praise and encourage the child

Follow the child’s interest
Have Fun!
Dialogic Reading - Level 2

Ask open-ended questions
  “Tell me what’s going on here”

Ask the child to say more

Expand what the child says
  Child says: “Duck swimming” You say, “Right, the duck is swimming”

Have Fun!
Some important ways that volunteers could contribute effectively to Florida’s reading initiatives:

Help to increase children’s vocabularies in preschool by using a simple technique like dialogic reading.

Work individually or with very small groups in kindergarten and first grade to teach about letters, sounds, and word work.
One approach for Regulars: TAILS or Tutor Assisted Learning Strategies
(Dr. Stephanie Al Otaiba)

- Built on prior research
  - (Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies by Fuchs, et al., 2001)

Includes explicit & systematic instruction in all five components

Materials are prepared for K-2 reading levels
  - Placement “test” to help you judge where to start
  - Behavioral, motivational, progress monitoring tips built in to materials
  - Directly linked to kids in-class reading program (SBRR)
Some important ways that volunteers could contribute effectively to Florida’s reading initiatives:

Help to increase children’s vocabularies in preschool by using a simple technique like dialogic reading.

Work individually or with very small groups in kindergarten and first grade to teach about letters, sounds, and word work.

Work with 2nd and 3rd graders to build fluency using a highly structured program.
GREAT LEAPS: A program to build reading fluency

Has lists of letters, words, phrases and passages

Children practice reading and reading the selections until they reach a fluency goal

Once they reach the fluency goal, they “leap ahead” to the next selection

Can be done effectively in very small segments of time – 6-8 minutes a day.

Would be relatively straightforward to have volunteers work with the program using a systematic schedule
Thank You

www.fcrr.org

Science of Reading Section