

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

F. PHILIP HANDY, *Chairman*

T. WILLARD FAIR, *Vice Chairman*

Members

DONNA G. CALLAWAY

JULIA L. JOHNSON

ROBERTO MARTÍNEZ

PHOEBE RAULERSON

LINDA K. TAYLOR

John L. Winn
Commissioner of Education



October 28, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: John L. Winn, Commissioner of Education

RE: K12 Comprehensive Reading Plans and Intensive Reading Courses

As you know, the Legislature has supported Just Read, Florida! through funding since 2002. The money the Legislature appropriated has been used for competitive grants to districts to provide reading coaches and research-based instructional materials to districts. Because there was a finite amount of money, not all districts were able to receive these grants. In an effort to make sure all students in all districts were benefiting from the funding, Governor Bush recommended, and the Legislature approved, that reading be an allocation within the FEFP (the Florida Education Finance Program). This means that every district receives an amount of money, based on the number of students they have, specifically for reading instruction.

For the 2005-06 school year, districts were to create a plan, based on guidance from the Just Read, Florida! Office, that would address, among other things, teacher and principal professional development, including the provision of reading coaches for teachers; district leadership; and elementary, middle, and secondary instruction. A 90-minute block of reading instruction was required for elementary students. The requirement for middle and secondary was that students below grade level (scoring Level 1 or 2 on FCAT) be placed in an intensive reading class. Students with serious reading problems, as determined by data, should be placed in intensive reading classes with extended time – because their deficiencies are such that a regular 50-minute class period would not be enough time to bring them up to grade level in one year. Students with

MARY LAURA OPENSHAW

DIRECTOR, JUST READ, FLORIDA!

lesser deficiencies could be served through a 50-minute class period, or in some cases, a content class (such as science), taught by a teacher with the Reading Endorsement. There is no 90-minute requirement for middle and secondary – only a requirement that students with great needs receive extended time in intensive reading instruction. For example, Palm Beach County is serving its Level 2 readers (who, according to data, show that their main reading issue is vocabulary and comprehension) in a geography class with a teacher who is either reading endorsed or currently working toward the reading endorsement.

Additionally, the State Board of Education, in April 2005, approved a new course description for the Intensive Reading Course, which replaced the course description for intensive language arts, intensive reading, and intensive basic skills. This course was created by Florida reading and language arts teachers, as well as a panel of experts assembled to advise me on middle and secondary reading instruction. The intent of this course is to ensure that students are receiving instruction in reading, and not solely in test preparation. It is important to note that this course approved by the State Board of Education does not dictate a 90-minute block of time.

Although 90 minutes was not a requirement for middle and secondary, I realize that many districts interpreted that to be the case. As we move forward into planning for the 2006-07 school year, there are areas of flexibility around the 90-minute block of which I want to encourage you to take advantage. Please be creative in your approach to providing kids with decoding issues the extra time that they need. Blocking together an intensive reading course and another course taught by the same teacher is a great way to provide these kids with the extended time for instruction.

Thank you for all you do for Florida's children. If you have questions or need further information, please contact Evan Lefsky, Director of Secondary Reading in the Just Read, Florida! Office, at 850/245-0503 or by email at evan.lefsky@fldoe.org.

JLW/mlo