

Abstract Title Page.

Title:

Comparison of Reading Comprehension Trends between Florida's *Reading First* and non-*Reading First* Schools for First through Third Grade Students.

Author(s):

Yaacov Petscher, Florida Center for Reading Research, Florida State University
Barbara Foorman, Florida Center for Reading Research, Florida State University

Abstract Body

Background/context:

During the first decade of the 21st century a national focus on primary grade reading has been mandated by the Reading First component of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. NCLB is the result of a bipartisan effort to strengthen accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; 1965) and to achieve its goal of reducing the achievement gap between students living in poverty and their more affluent peers. To accomplish this goal, a target of reaching 100% proficiency by 2014 was established for all students and disaggregated data were used to determine Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) towards that deadline. Additionally, teachers were required to meet the federal definition of highly qualified as having at least a bachelor's degree and certification in the subject area in which they teach. The Reading First component of NCLB also required that instructional strategies in kindergarten through third grade be based on scientifically-based reading research.

Purpose/objective/research question/focus of study:

The current study will examine possible contextual effects relative to differences in reading comprehension performance in the state of Florida. While the RF Impact study examined such difference using a regression discontinuity design, we are primarily interested in other analytic methods that might answer different questions relative to effectiveness. Using schools and aggregate district level data, we will study the extent to which Reading First funded schools improved reading comprehension scores on both a normed and criterion referenced tests more strongly than non-Reading First funded schools.

Setting:

Reading First in Florida started in 2003 with a cohort of 320 schools. A second and third funding cycle occurred in 2004 and 2005 as well, with schools and districts across the cohorts diverse in both minority status and urban/rural make-up.

Population/Participants/Subjects:

The current study will use only schools and districts from the first cohort of schools that had data from 2003-2008. Using this criterion, an initial sample of 320 schools across 51 districts were represented. Only schools with at least fifty students within a school were retained, resulting in 3 schools being dropped. In addition to the Reading First schools, a sample of 320 non-RF schools will be included as well to serve as a comparison group for the analyses.

Intervention/Program/Practice:

Districts within Florida's Reading First context were eligible for consideration if they met the following criteria: 1) At least 30% of 4th grade students were reading below grade level and 2) At least 10% of the students in the districts were from families below the federal poverty line. Schools were eligible if: 1) More than 47% of 4th grade students were reading below grade level and 2) At least 15% of students were receiving free and reduced price lunch. Across the three funding years, a total of 586 schools were awarded funding, with 320 selected in the first cycle,

70 in the second cycle, and 196 in the third cycle. As part of the Reading First agreement, participating schools agreed to implement a 90-minute reading block, use a scientifically based reading research curriculum in the classroom from an approved state list, employ a reading coach, and utilize an online state-wide progress monitoring reporting network (PMRN) for data upload and classroom performance review.

Research Design:

A quasi-experimental design will be used in the present study to answer the following research questions:

(1) Did schools and districts who received Reading First funding beginning in 2003 perform differently than non-Reading First schools in reading comprehension over a period of 8 years across first through third grades?

(2) Did rates of learning disability identification differentially decrease between the Reading First and non-Reading First schools over a period of 8 years?

Data Collection and Analysis:

Data Collection. Schools administered the Stanford Achievement Test (10th Ed.) for first and second grade students in the spring of each year from 2003 to 2008 (approximately April). Third grade students took both the SAT-10, as well as the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, which is a criterion reference test, in the winter of each year

Data analysis: Since schools in Reading First were funded based on particular characteristics of their population, it is expected that Reading First schools will not be representative of the state as a whole. Further, because Reading First in Florida does not include non-funded control schools, differences could exist simply due to pre-existing baseline variability. In order to provide tighter control over variables that typically contribute to variability, propensity scores will be used to match non-Reading First schools to the current Reading First sample. Using these propensity matched groups, a latent interrupted time-series analysis will be used to examine differences in school and district level means in reading comprehension, as well as in the rate of learning disability identification.

Findings/Results: to be determined.

Conclusions: to be determined.