

# **Proposal for a Research Study on Professional Development and Teacher Quality**

**Title of Study: Identifying the Conditions under which Large Scale Professional Development Policy Initiatives are Related to Teacher Knowledge, Instructional Practices, and Student Reading Outcomes**

**Principal Investigator: Alysia D. Roehrig, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology & Learning Systems  
Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR)  
227 N. Bronough St., Suite 7250  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
Phone: 850-644-9080  
Fax: 850-644-9085

## **1. Proposal Abstract Outline (3 Pages)**

This is an application under Goal One (Identification) of the IES program for Teacher Quality Research— Reading/Writing Grants. The purpose of the proposed study is to identify what professional development activities associated with Reading First efforts predict teacher knowledge of reading instruction, use of instructional practices in line with scientifically based reading research (SBRR), and teachers' student achievement outcomes on oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and phonological awareness skills. In the study we will identify what professional development activities associated with Reading First and other school/district efforts predict teacher knowledge, instructional practices, and student reading outcomes. The primary population of interest is elementary teachers specifically kindergarten, grade-1, grade-2 and grade-3 teachers providing reading instruction at Reading First schools. While Reading First policy has led to more professional development for teachers related to reading in our neediest schools, the quantity and quality of professional development varies between schools. We propose to take advantage of this natural variation as well as the wealth of data already collected by the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) related to Reading First implementation to identify professional development that seems to work in these schools.

**a** This study is comprised of two parts: Year One: A Large Correlational study and Year Two: A Smaller study using a subset of participants focusing on the coaching aspect of professional development. The following proposal and application to conduct research in this county is for Year One of the study only.

**Research Questions:**

Question 1: What PD activities predict teacher knowledge of reading instruction?

Question 2: What PD activities predict teacher use of instructional practices in line with scientifically based reading research (SBRR)?

Question 3: What PD activities predict student outcomes on oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and phonological awareness skills (controlling for incoming achievement)?

**The Study will be conducted in:**

~ **Fall 2005** - The pilot study will be conducted in Fall 2005 (beginning October 17 to December 16) to evaluate the research instruments with a target # of 8 K-3 teacher volunteers from Lee County who were observed during Reading First Site Visits.

**AND**

~ **Spring 2006** - The full study will be conducted in the Spring 2006 (beginning in January) with a target # of 150 K-3 teacher volunteers from randomly selected Reading First schools in Lee County.

**Research Activities will consist of:**

~ A 60-90 minute survey taken by K-3 reading first teachers (\$50 stipend included, see informed consent letters)

~ Data collection from archived Reading First Site Visit Team classroom observations housed at our FCRR (Florida Center for Reading Research) site. These data have been coded using the *Ins fractional Content Emphasis- Revised* (ICE-R; Edmonds & Briggs, 2003a), which is the observational instrument used by the site visit team. These data will be used only in the Fall pilot study to validate the survey of teachers' self-reported use of instructional practices. The ICE-R is primarily focused on the content and format of reading instruction.

~ Data collection of archived, anonymous student data from the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) database, including Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Stanford Achievement Test, 10th edition (SAT-b). This data will be collected for students of participating teachers. Since data will be deidentified, it will not be necessary to secure permission from individual parents for use of student data in the analyses; however, approval of this study by the district and the informed consent of participating teachers are required for use of this data in the study.

**Benefits to the County:** The Reading First Program employs three policy levers to improve reading instruction: assessment, professional development, and reading curriculum that has a basis in

research. The underlying assumption of the Reading First program is that states can improve teacher practice, and subsequently increase student achievement, by implementing these three elements of instructional policy. While Reading First policy has lead to more professional development for teachers related to reading in our neediest schools, the quantity and quality of professional development varies among schools, as do student reading gains. This study will help to identify professional development strategies that seem to work well in the Lee County school district and provide information that can inform district educators! administrators about how to best design and implement professional development efforts to secure changes in teachers' reading practices as well as strong outcomes in students' reading achievement.

**Dissemination of Findings:**

- ~ At the conclusion of the analysis of the data, it is our intention that findings of this study be presented in the form of national conference presentations and published research journal articles.
  
- ~ It is predicted that data collection for year one of the study will be done by June 2006 and that data analysis will be completed by June 2007. A summary of the study's findings will be made available to the Lee County school district at that time.