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November 14, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: *Reading First* District School Superintendents

FROM: Evan B. Lefsky, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Just Read, Florida!

RE: *Reading First* Funding

This memorandum is written to notify you of the status of *Reading First* funding after the 2007-2008 school year. There is a strong possibility that Congress will continue making appropriations for the *Reading First* program beyond the time limits established in the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act*. The *NCLB Act*, which includes the *Reading First* program, is scheduled for reauthorization in 2007-2008. If the *NCLB Act* is reauthorized, there is a strong possibility that *Reading First*, given its success around the country, would be reauthorized as well.

If reauthorization is delayed, Congress has the option of continuing to fund the *Reading First* program at current levels. There is a strong possibility that Congress will provide funding at some level, possibly even at current levels for the 2008-2009 school year. If Congress decides to fund *Reading First* at current levels, we will continue to fund the *Reading First* program for all 45 *Reading First* districts at current funding for the 2008-2009 school year. That is, we will fund Cohort 1 schools at 50%, Cohort 2 schools at 65%, and Cohort 3 schools at 80%. At this time, there has not been a decision made by Congress; however, when they have reached a final decision, we will notify you as soon as possible.

EVAN B. LEFSKY, PH.D.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JUST READ, FLORIDA!

If the funding for the *Reading First* program is not extended beyond current limits by the United States Congress, which is highly unlikely, the last year that Florida will be able to provide these funds to districts is the 2007-2008 school year. This will apply to all *Reading First* schools in your district, regardless of how long they have had the *Reading First* grant.

In Florida, 583 schools in 45 districts are currently receiving *Reading First* funds to help improve reading instruction in grades K-3. Our latest outcome data show that, on average, schools in all cohorts made improvements over the previous year in increasing the percentage of students reading at grade level and reducing the percentage of students with serious reading difficulties at each grade level, K-3. Even with this great success, we still have a long way to go before we can say that we are leaving “no child behind” in reading growth in the early elementary grades; thus, it is our intention that the *Reading First* program continue. We strongly encourage districts to delay on decisions related to the employment of reading coaches in *Reading First* schools until we have a clearer picture of future funding.

We, of course, are concerned about being able to sustain the gains we have made in Florida through the *Reading First* program. We encourage you to begin discussions within your district about ways to sustain the elements of the program that you have found most useful and successful. Florida is fortunate in that there has been legislation to establish a K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan, which will be our driving force for sustainability of *Reading First*; in addition, I’ve attached the following two resources on sustainability: *Building a Strong Reading Culture: What You Can Do* and *Developing Effective Reading Leadership*.

If you have any questions about *Reading First* funding, please contact Cari Miller, Director of *Reading First*, at Cari.Miller@fldoe.org.

Thank you all for your continued support and hard work in making *Reading First* a success.

EBL/cm

CC: *Reading First* District Contacts
Reading First Professional Development Coordinators

Attachments