



R.E.A.D Initiative Abstract

“Reading is the gateway skill that makes all other learning possible.” – Barack Obama

We know that there is no greater indicator of future academic success than being proficient in reading. In Thomasville, the vast majority of elementary aged students read below proficient levels. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and Georgia Department of Education from 2020-2021 school years indicates that in our county school system only 32% of elementary students read at grade level proficiency and in our city school system that number is only 37%. Both school systems rank behind the Georgia state average of 39%.

With this data in mind, and with a desire to assist our school systems in meeting the academic development goals of our Thomasville students, The Thomasville/Thomas County Sports Academy is launching The R.E.A.D. (Reading Elevates Academic Achievement) Initiative. The R.E.A.D. Initiative aims to increase reading proficiency of struggling readers through partnerships with both the county and city school systems, as well as the Marguerite Neel Williams Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Georgia by using systematic, evidence-based, intensive phonics-based reading interventions.

The Thomasville Thomas County Sports Academy (TTSCA) is a non-profit organization located in the city of Thomasville Georgia. The organization was founded in 2015 by Bryan Howell, a community member who saw a need for kids to have an outlet to get them outside of the house involved in sports and other activities that would help them learn valuable life skills. The Thomasville Thomas County Sport Academy is on a mission to mold the minds and improve quality of life for future leaders of our community and enhance educational opportunities through sports and academic development.

The Thomasville Thomas County Sports Academy board member, Stephan Thompson, is a Thomasville native who currently serves on the board of several organizations including the Board of Literacy for Thomas County and the Literacy by 3rd Grade Workforce Committee. The Reading Specialist working on this initiative is Lin Jackson, who holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree in Special Education with certifications in early childhood education, teaching reading, and ESOL (English as a second language).

She has previously worked within public school systems as both a classroom teacher and as a Reading Specialist and Interventionist and is well versed in the three components we plan to utilize in our R.E.A.D. Initiative.

The goal of the R.E.A.D. Initiative is to implement a three-part, evidence-based intensive phonics-based reading intervention program for students who are reading below grade level expectations. For many years, the focus of most reading intervention programs has been increasing reading fluency and comprehension, however, more recent research indicates that students who do not have a firm grasp of phonics and phonemic awareness will struggle with accuracy in reading which leads to delays in fluency and reading comprehension. Simply put, if a child cannot read accurately, they will not be able to read quickly or gain understanding of what they are reading. By targeting phonics instruction as an intervention, we can increase a student's phonemic awareness and orthographic knowledge to help achieve greater levels of accuracy and fluency in reading, opening the door to greater levels of reading comprehension.

The R.E.A.D. Initiative will utilize assessment and ongoing progress monitoring through the DIBELS, (that is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment), Lesson plans from the University of Florida Literacy Institute's Foundations program, and materials from the Literacy Footprints curriculum. The R.E.A.D. Initiative program will take place outside of the school from a community perspective!

This three-part intervention program will target increases in reading proficiency through intensive phonics instruction. Just a quick overview of these three components: DIBELS is It is a comprehensive assessment that helps identify students with reading difficulties using one-to-three-minute drills across 6 areas of reading skills including alphabetic principle, phonemic awareness, phonics, sight word fluency, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. The UFLI Foundations program is an explicit and systematic program that follows a carefully developed scope and sequence designed to ensure that students systematically acquire each skill needed and learn to apply each skill with automaticity and confidence. The Literacy Footprints program provides intervention materials that allow for systematic and explicit reading instruction in small group settings across all reading levels in grades K through 6. The R.E.A.D. initiative will utilize a paid Reading Specialist, as well as volunteers trained in reading interventions to assess, group, explicitly instruct, and monitor the progress of students to encourage academic development and reading proficiency.

The R.E.A.D. Initiative will be spearheaded by our Reading Specialist, Lin Jackson who will administer the initial assessments, group students by both grade level and proficiency level, train volunteers in reading intervention strategies, prep materials for each group on a weekly basis, conduct progress monitoring measures, track data, assist volunteers with small group instruction, and collaborate with staff at the boys and girls club as well as classroom teachers as needed. Once funding and space have been procured, Thomasville/Thomas County Sports Academy will work to recruit volunteers from various community organizations who will then take part in a one-week training program conducted by Lin Jackson. The Sports Academy will also identify students who participate in the Boys and Girls clubs' programs and will obtain parental consent to work with these students in our program. Initially, our program will serve 20-25 students. As students achieve reading proficiency, they will graduate from our program, and we will work to identify additional students who demonstrate the need for services to take their place. We will collaborate with classroom teachers of students to obtain current classroom data and share data we collect. Students will receive intervention through small group instruction for 30

minutes per afternoon Monday through Thursday each week for a total of two hours per week. Progress monitoring assessment will be conducted once every two weeks on each student to both guide instruction and measure outcomes. The program will initially run for one full school year with the hope of continuing in future school years. A large portion of the materials we're requesting will be one-time purchases as they can be reproduced and utilized throughout both our initial school year and any subsequent school years and across multiple groups of students. Following projected success in our first school semester, we hope to increase our student numbers and serve additional students. This growth will be dependent on additional funding, increases in volunteers and additional student needs. Outcomes will be measured both by data collected as part of the ongoing progress monitoring and through school data based on MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessments that are administered on a school-based level 3 times per year. Our intent is that students who participate in the R.E.A.D. Initiative will show notable increases in school-based assessments and have higher levels of reading proficiency across all areas of academic development.

In order to make our R.E.A.D. Initiative successful, Thomasville/Thomas County Sports Academy will be seeking out both funding and partnership with community organizations. Our hope is that the Marguerite Neel Williams Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Georgia will be our homebase for this program. Along with space to store materials, we will need dedicated space to set up tables and chairs for groups of students and interventionists, and access to student information provided by the school systems and classroom teachers of the students enrolled in our program.

Program Needs:

DIBELS 8th Edition Materials:

- Paper/Pencil Administration and Scoring Guide
- Kindergarten Progress Monitoring Kit
- First Grade Progress Monitoring Kit
- Second Grade Progress Monitoring Kit
- Third Grade Progress Monitoring Kit
- Fourth Grade Progress Monitoring Kit
- Fifth Grade Progress Monitoring Kit
- Sixth Grade Progress Monitoring Kit

UF Literacy Institute Materials:

- Foundations Lesson Plan Manual

Literacy Footprints Materials:

- Complete K-6 Collection
- Word Study Materials Kit
- Writing Journals

Additional Instructional Materials:

- Storage Carts
- Sticky notes
- Dry erase markers

- Printer paper
- Dot markers
- Clorox wipes
- Hand sanitizer

Reading Intervention Specialist:

- 12.5 hours per week for 36 week school year (Monday through Thursday from 3:00-5:30 pm for R.E.A.D. Initiative program hours, as well as Friday from 3:00-5:30 pm for planning/data analysis.)