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President's Message

By: Brian Dorman, FLCA President
Sanford Middle School Reading Coach,
Seminole County Public Schools

As the end of the 2007 – 2008 school year quickly approaches, it is important to begin planning for next year. We know the changes in the budget will affect all of us in one way or another. How you handle the changes, however, is up to each individual.

With student learning in mind, it is important to continue to focus on improving instruction these last few weeks of school. Having our students prepared for the next grade level is in our hands from now until the last day of school.

Encourage your teachers to suggest titles of books their students could read over the summer. Reach out to the upcoming students and encourage them to read during the summer. Even without a formal program or assignment, just have the students share what they read on the first day of the new school year.

One idea shared to me by a language arts teacher was to start a book the last week of school using the read aloud technique. She hoped the students would be interested enough in the book to check it out of the public library and finish reading it on their own.

Respectfully,



Brian Dorman



Upcoming FLCA Events

June 29, 2008 FLCA Coaches Institute
Orlando World Center Marriott
Orlando, FL

June 29 –
July 2, 2008 Just Read, Florida
Leadership Conference
Orlando World Center Marriott
Orlando, FL

By The Numbers

States: Indiana,
Pennsylvania &
South Carolina

559 Current membership
61 Districts Represented
3 Other states represented

FLCA Institute

The Florida Literacy Coaches Association is hosting its first FLCA Institute in conjunction with the Just Read, Florida! Leadership Conference. Mark your calendar for Sunday, June 29 at the Orlando World Center Marriott. Guest speakers will include Even Lefsky, Ph.D., Executive Director of Just Read, Florida!, Barbara Elzie, Deputy Director Just Read, Florida!, Enrique A. Puig, Project Director of FLARE and Josh Hall for Foundation for Florida's Future. Also the Florida Literacy Coaches Association Board of Directors will be introduced. Please join us at 1:00PM. We hope to see you there!

Beryl Rogers, FLCA President-Elect

Florida 
Literacy Coaches
Association
Summer Institute

Ideas from the Front Lines

Reading is the Essence of Everything

By: Patricia Rouse
Reading Coach
Belle Vue Middle School
Leon County

Reading, writing, arithmetic, these are the only three words that I will mention in remembrance of an old saying while jumping rope as a child. Some readers may know the rest while others may wonder why the writer mentioned only the words reading, writing and arithmetic. It may seem cliché to ask, which came first? But that is the question many educators want to know. The aforementioned words may be in logical order when you think about what they mean. In order to write anything, you have to be able to read the prompt or question. In order to do math, you have to read word problems and, most importantly, the directions.

Several years ago, a cry across the state was heard when math teachers and science teachers complained about not being reading teachers. In some arenas, there are still complaints about having to infuse reading across the curriculum. The question we should be asking is why not? Reading is the essence of everything we do and it is time we began to acknowledge the importance this ubiquitous expression.

“In the era of Reading First and especially the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, performing below grade level in reading and writing carries increasingly

higher stakes for retention and ultimately withholding of high school diplomas (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Increasingly more students are entering the secondary level with deficiencies in reading, multiple retentions, and increased humiliation with the learning environment. It is not unusual for a student to act out and become a discipline problem just to avoid having to participate in class. “In 1983, when a *Nation at Risk* was published, the nation became alarmed by declining scores in reading and math, and the cry went out for academic standards to be set” (Hirsh, 2008, p. 8). So what are we going to do about that same situation today? We should all agree that the nation is *still* alarmed, but how are we being progressive?

“Part of what makes it so difficult to meet the needs of struggling readers and writers in middle and high school is that these students experience a wide range of challenges that require an equally wide range of interventions” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004, p. 8). Elementary school is great because students are in one class with one teacher all day. The environment is highly print-rich and they have special area teachers who accentuate their day with entertainment and fun. But, when the same student moves on to middle school the

cushion of adaptability is snatched away suddenly to reveal the big picture. As educators, we often take for granted that these children have just left a world of read alouds, color and picture books, and hands on centers that allowed them to visualize what they were learning while reading. And instead of embracing those strategies, we pull them farther and farther away from their comfort zone.

How do we get our students tuned in to Science, Math, or Social Studies? How do we instill in them the will to want to read and apply what they have learned in other arenas? We have to remind them that through reading we find ways to decipher the meaning regardless of our classroom environment or the subject being taught. Teaching students the mechanisms necessary to be a successful reader will permeate the walls of the classroom, curriculum, and standards across the school, community, and nation. When children become better readers, they become better citizens. "America's schools need to produce literate citizens who are prepared to compete in the global economy and who have the skills to pursue their own learning well beyond high school" (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004, p.9). So the next time you hear the words: reading, writing, and arithmetic, just know that reading is the essence of all those subjects. We have to give our students ammunition to fight against drop out,

illiteracy, and poor grades. "But to make this ambitious vision a reality, funders, researchers, policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents, and students must join forces as common stakeholders in the improvement of adolescent literacy" (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004, pl 31). So the next time a student in Science class asks about motion, tell them to read. When a math student is stuck on a problem, tell them to read about the distributive property, order of operations, or other formula or definition. The goal should be teaching all students the importance of utilizing text for understanding, learning, and succeeding.

References

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Coaching Update

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Florida 
Literacy Coaches
Association



By: Josh Hall
Foundation for Florida's Future

Legislative Update



Prior to concluding the 2008 Legislative Session, the Legislature passed the 2008-09 budget. The budget includes a cut to overall reading funding of less than 3%, along with a provision to allow school districts to use their Reading Categorical funds for other purposes. As the primary source of state funding for reading coaches, many districts are already making plans to use this flexibility and cut reading coaches.

You can still take action to preserve the progress that reading coaches have made, but it's going to be even more difficult now as the decision making moves to the district level.

1. **Build a local coalition:** Reach out to the other reading coaches, classroom teachers, principals, etc. Let them know what's going on. **ASK THEM FOR THEIR SUPPORT.** Ask them to write individual statements and/or sign a joint statement expressing their support of reading coaches and asking the school board to fund coaches. Ask them to join with you when meeting with legislators, community leaders, and school board members.
2. **Meet with your local delegation:** Meet with each of your State Senators and Representatives. Educate them on what exactly you do, the value of reading coaches, the impact you've made on student performance across all subjects, etc. Include anecdotes and statistics. **ASK THEM FOR THEIR**

SUPPORT. Ask them to write a letter of support to the school board and superintendent to preserve reading coaches.

3. **Communicate to your local community:** Write op-eds to your local newspaper. Reach out to TV and print education reporters. Talk with parents. Meet with community leaders. **ASK THEM FOR THEIR SUPPORT.**
4. **Focus on your School Board:** As an organized coalition, attend school board meetings and speak up for reading coaches. **ASK THEM FOR THEIR SUPPORT.** Write to and meet with school board members and your superintendent.

Go to the FLCA website located at www.floraliteracycoaches.org for more information about what to say. If you get organized and active, you can still make a difference in many districts throughout the state.

If you have any questions or would like help, please contact Josh Hall at (850) 298-8571 or jsoh@afloridapromise.org.

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ATTENTION!!!

Encourage your fellow coaches to
join!

MEMBERSHIP FORMS AVAILABLE ON THE
FLORIDA LITERACY COACHES
ASSOCIATION WEBSITE