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## President's Message

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

Recently, I have been looking at Florida's results on the 2007 NAEP test. Specifically, I was interested in fourth-grade results and how this will affect middle schools in a few years.

As educators attempt to close the achievement gap in their students, the data suggested there were positive results. However, the same data indicated progress is very slow. Without dramatically increasing the achievement of the subgroup students, they will continue to miss the annual measurable objectives established by the state to reach the achievement goals determined by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.

Taken as a whole, fourth-grade students demonstrated improvement in their average scale scores compared with earlier years. However, when examining the subgroup data, there were no significant changes in the achievement gaps, with the exception of the achievement gap between white and black students. No group other than white to black students had more than a three point decrease. The white to black students showed a five point decrease. Projecting this trend into the future, it would be expected that these students would continue to demonstrate a three to five point decrease in the achievement gap. On the other hand, as many researchers have observed, the gap becomes more and more difficult to close as the students get older. It would be more accurate to predict that the gap would decrease by less than three points for each group; and perhaps, the gap would begin to widen again as these students completed middle school without substantial

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changes in the way middle school teachers engage their students.

It is common knowledge that the achievement gap is harder to close as the students get older. Middle school teachers need to be able to use a variety of assessment tools. These assessments will provide the necessary information to determine if students are able to use the strategies they are learning. As students learn to set a purpose for reading and to monitor their own comprehension, learning should improve. Once students are more involved in their learning, standardized test results should improve and the achievement gaps should begin to close significantly.

Continue to spend your time working with the teachers in their classrooms. You should be able to share your wealth of knowledge to help these teachers close the achievement gaps.



Brian Dorman

## Upcoming FLCA Events

November 9, 2007      FLCA Board meeting  
University of Central Florida,  
Teaching Academy  
Orlando, FL

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## By The Numbers

559	Current membership
61	Districts Represented
3	Other states represented

## Research Review

### *How important is reading skill fluency for comprehension?*

By: Maxine Mangus, Coaching Update Editor  
Tavares Middle School Literacy Coach  
Lake County Public Schools

“94 second through fifth graders were tested and it was found that the 33 poorest readers comprehended best when they read aloud.”

LaVerge and Samuels; Samuels and Flor; and, Perfetti stated “the scientific basis for the current emphasis on word reading fluency can be partially traced to automaticity theory and verbal efficiency theory (as cited in Walczyk, J. & Griffith-Ross, D., 2007).

Shearer, Ruddell and Vogt, as well as Vogt and Nagano concluded that “struggling readers often experience significant improvements in comprehension when taught reading strategies (as cited in Walczyk, J. & Griffith-Ross, D., 2007). When readers are uncertain about the meaning of a word, or the meaning of the text they usually use one of several “compensations.” By “compensations” we mean that they use some reading strategy they have learned in order to understand the text about which they are confused. If one strategy does not work, most students will try another.

### COMMON COMPENSATIONS:

**1. Slowing reading rate.** Research by Baker and Brown, Chall, and Walczyk, Wie, Griffith-Ross, Goubert, Cooper, and Zha found “slowing reading helps to prevent many confusions by allowing  
*Please see Research Review on page 3*

“10 to 15% of children have comprehension difficulties that are not due to poor word reading.” (Yuill & Oakhill, 1991)

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## Research Review Continued

inefficient readers to read text at a pace that their skills can handle, whereas faster reading might overwhelm skills” (as cited in Walczyk, J. & Griffith-Ross, D., 2007).

**2. Pause.** For some readers slowing the reading rate does not provide enough time to decode; therefore, pausing may be the next attempt to understand the text.

**3. Look Back.** Walczyk, et al. defined *look back* as the reprocessing of three words or less. Cataldo & Oakhill stated this was slightly more disruptive of word reading than slowing reading rate or pausing. Ehri found it can aid poor word reading by uncovering textual cues to an unfamiliar word’s meaning (as cited in Walczyk, J. & Griffith-Ross, D., 2007).

**4. Read Aloud.** Bereiter and Bird, and Ericsson stated “reading aloud helps focus attention when readers are tired or bored and facilitates comprehension monitoring.” Ehri, and Walker found “it is especially helpful for less fluent readers, providing auditory feedback on the accuracy of their word reading attempts” (as cited in Walczyk, J. & Griffith-Ross, D., 2007).

**5. Sounding Out, Analogizing to Know Sight Word, or Contextual Guessing.** This attempt is characterized as one where the student tries first to sound out the unfamiliar word. If that does not make sense, they try to either look at the word and find one that they already know that is similar or they look at context clues and make a guess.

**6. Jump Over.** Another compensation that is employed is the *jump over*. Here the reader just ignores any

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“Struggling readers who do not compensate appropriately can be taught to do so.”

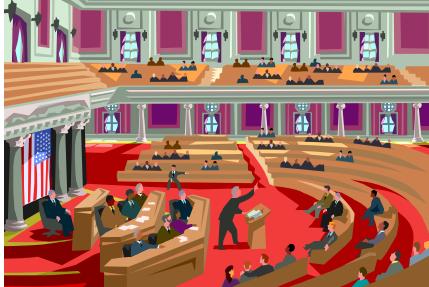
words that they don't readily understand. Walczyk, Wie, Griffith-Ross, Goubert, Cooper, and Zha found “older readers know that spending too much time resolving such confusion can cause them to forget important information previously read, making it harder to form connections” (as cited in Walczyk, J. & Griffith-Ross, D., 2007). Too much *jumping over*, however, can lower comprehension.

**7. Reread Text.** Walczyk, Marsiglia, Johns, and Bryan further stated “rereading is compensatory when it resolves confusion noted on an earlier pass through text but is more disruptive of reading than preceding compensations. As a consequence, skilled readers will employ it only after other compensations have not prevented or resolved confusion (as cited in Walczyk, J. & Griffith-Ross, D., 2007).

According to Winstead, “struggling readers only need to compensate when confusions occur or are imminent. Struggling readers who do not compensate appropriately can be taught to do so. After applying the compensations, students can discuss which ones worked best for them” (as cited in Walczyk, J. & Griffith-Ross, D., 2007).

Reference:

Walczyk, J. J., & Griffith-Ross, D. A. (2007). How important is reading skill fluency for comprehension? *The Reading Teacher*, 60(6), 560-569.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

On October 3, the Legislature convened a Special Session to trim \$1 billion from the current \$71 billion state budget. Lower than expected tax revenues required the legislators to come back to the state capital to ensure a balanced budget for the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

To mitigate reduced recurring revenue in education, the Legislature used \$168 million in one-time funding to pay for annual expenses. A portion of the overall reduction in public schools includes \$147 million for merit pay, which can be restored in the next budget and used for October 2008 awards as planned.

Even though the final K-12 budget reduced public school spending by \$402 million, per student spending is still up \$355 or 5.2 percent from last year.

Reference:

The Capitol Report. (Fall 2007). *The Foundation for Florida's Future*. Available from [www.afloridapromise.org](http://www.afloridapromise.org).