Families Building Better Readers

BLUEPRINTS FOR SUCCESS
A FAMILY LITERACY WORKSHOP FOR THE ELEMENTARY GRADES
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Welcome!

Thank you for attending this Families Building Better Readers™ workshop. By attending this workshop, you are sending a clear message to your child that his or her education is important to you. Get ready to have a fun-filled time while you learn valuable skills for helping your child become the best reader he or she can be.

About the Workshop

Families Building Better Readers™ (FBBR) is a collaborative effort between the Florida Department of Education’s Just Read, Florida! initiative and the Volunteer Florida Foundation. Dr. Angela Martin is the author.

Purposes

During this workshop you will:

• learn the importance of consistent reading practice at home;
• learn 10 simple, quick, and effective activities that set your child up for successful reading practice;
• learn how to build your child’s confidence as a reader; and
• gain resources for helping your child practice reading at home.

Workshop Agenda

This workshop lasts about two and a half hours.

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How to B-U-I-L-D a Better Reader

Be positive!

• Take the approach of a positive “coach” when working with your child. A child learns best from a parent who is supportive and uncritical. Your child needs to hear you say again and again, “You can do it!”

• Always set your child up for success to build self-efficacy (personal belief that he or she is capable). This “I-can” attitude means your child is less likely to quit, even when learning proves difficult.

Unplug the TV!

• Unplug the TV. The time is better spent reading.

• When your child does watch TV, turn on the closed caption option to develop concept of word/word identification. Encourage the viewing of quality educational programming to build knowledge base and vocabulary that are necessary for good comprehension.

Increase time spent reading!

• Studies show the average child spends only 5 minutes a day reading outside of school hours. That is simply not enough practice!

• The single most important activity related to eventual success in reading is time spent reading... practice, practice, practice!

• Can you dedicate at least 20 minutes per day to guide your child’s reading practice? That time adds up to over 100 hours a year. These hours of practice with your one-on-one help will make a big difference in your child’s reading ability.

Learn new ways to practice at home!

• Keep up the good things you are already doing to help your child in school, such as supervising homework and reading books together daily!

• During this workshop you will learn 10 simple yet effective strategies for helping your child practice reading at home.

• Enjoy learning a poem with your child by Shel Silverstein called “Boa Constrictor” (from the book Where the Sidewalk Ends).

decide to partner with the school!

• The school has a role to play and so do you. The school provides initial instruction. Your part is to give your child opportunities to practice what is learned in school at home. What does it take to become a good reader? Practice, practice, practice.

• Your decision to make your child’s education a priority makes a big difference. There is a strong correlation between parent involvement and academic performance. Thank you for demonstrating your commitment by attending this workshop! We thank you, and your child thanks you.
Goal: Choose books for reading practice that are on an appropriate level for your child.

Reading practice benefits children most when they read books that are not too easy or too hard, but are just right. This blueprint will give you a way for determining if a book is on the appropriate practice level for your child.

Activity: In this activity you and your child will test out potential texts for reading practice.

Supplies: Books at varying levels of difficulty

What to Do...

1. **Choose a book.**
   Pick one that you think will be “just right” for your child; a book your child probably won’t find too easy or too difficult. You can ask your child’s teacher if you need suggestions.

2. **Listen to your child read.**
   Have your child read aloud a short passage from the book.

3. **Test accuracy rate.**
   Out of every ten words your child reads, count how many words are missed. Count a “miss” every time your child does not read a word correctly or takes longer than three seconds to get it right.
   - If your child does not miss any words, that book is too easy for reading practice so test out another book that is more difficult.
   - If your child misses two or more words out of every ten words read, that book is too hard for reading practice, so test out another book that your child may find easier.
   - If your child misses no more than one out of every ten words read, you have successfully found a book that is “just right” for reading practice. Your child will be able to read 90% of the words accurately and easily and only have difficulty 10% of the time.
Guiding Reading Practice

Goal: Help your child get the most out of reading practice.

Parents can help their children improve reading scores by offering consistent opportunities for good reading practice at home. This blueprint gives you some ideas for helping your child get the most out of the time he or she spends practicing reading.

Activity: In this activity you will use proven strategies to “keep the ball rolling” by effectively guiding your child’s reading practice.

Supplies: Locate books, magazines, textbooks, newspapers, etc., that are on the appropriate practice level for your child (see “Choosing the Right Book” blueprint)

What to Do...

1. Make sure your child benefits from doing easy repeated readings.
   This approach is just what it sounds like; the child reads the same easy book over and over again. Easy repeated readings help children speed up their reading rates, learn new sight words, and develop their abilities to read in a natural voice using more expression.

2. Make reading practice an enjoyable thinking activity.
   Interact with the story as your child reads. Ask questions and react to story events. Summarize events periodically and seek predictions for what may happen next.

3. Help your child with difficult words.
   If your child is stuck on a word for more than three seconds, pronounce the word so your child can maintain the flow in reading. Letting your child struggle for a long time on a particular word interferes with his or her ability to understand the text. After you finish reading the book, you can look back at the words your child missed and review them or practice those words later using flashcards (see “Three Strikes—You Win” blueprint).

4. Try taking turns.
   Your child does not have to do all the reading. It is okay to take turns reading, especially if the story is long. Try these strategies:

   - **Echo reading**
     You read a selection using proper expression and your child mimics you by reading it again.

   - **Tap-off reading**
     Each of you indicates when you want your turn to end by tapping the table or each other.
PART TWO: GAMES READERS PLAY

Goal: Help your child to read smoothly and at a steady pace.

*Reading smoothly, accurately, and with expression is called fluency. Fluent readers can focus on the meaning of what they are reading because their brain power is freed up from having to figure out unknown words.*

Activity: In this activity you will time your child repeatedly reading the same short passage over several days. This activity gives your child a chance to learn from mistakes and pick up speed when reading. Your child will likely read the passage more quickly, smoothly, and accurately each time he or she rereads it and is timed. This builds your child’s confidence as a reader and ultimately leads to the ability to concentrate less on individual words while reading and focus more on the meaning of the whole text.

Supplies: • Short reading passage from an appropriate level book (see “Choosing the Right Book” blueprint)
• Stopwatch or clock with a second hand
• Ready, Set, Read! scoring sheet (included with this blueprint)

What to Do...

1. **Select a passage.**
The passage should not be too easy or too difficult for your child to read. As a general rule of thumb, the selected passage should be long enough to take your child at least one minute to read it through the first time. A page from a chapter book may be a good choice in terms of length for a more advanced reader.

2. **Do one pre-reading of the passage.**
Let your child read the passage to you once without being timed. Help him or her identify any unfamiliar words.

3. **Explain the “reading race”**
Tell your child you are going to time him or her to see how quickly he or she can read the passage without making too many mistakes. The goal is only to do his or her personal best. Your child can relax knowing he or she is not competing against anyone else.
4. **Start the “reading race.”**
   Remind your child to read “quickly but carefully” and then start the race by announcing, “Ready, Set, Read!”
   Time how long (in seconds) it takes him or her to read the entire passage.

5. **Supply your child any missed or unfamiliar words.**
   If your child makes a mistake or cannot read a word within three seconds, give your child that word so he or she can quickly move on. Keep a count of how many words were missed and review those missed words once the timing is over. Consider using those missed words for the flashcards you make for the “Three Strikes—You Win” blueprint.

6. **Determine the “score.”**
   You determine the score by adding the number of words missed to the total number of seconds it took your child to read the passage. Record that number on a Ready, Set, Read! scoring sheet (included on the next page).

7. **Have your child read the same passage again the next day.**
   Challenge your child to read the passage again even more quickly and carefully.
   Time and record the new (and most likely improved) score.

8. **Repeat this process up to five times using the same reading passage.**
   Do no more than two timed readings a day. When your child can read that passage smoothly, quickly, and with very few errors, you can select a different passage and begin a new series of timed readings.
**Ready, Set, Read! Scoring Sheet**

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<th>SAMPLE PASSAGE</th>
<th>Start Date:</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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<td>62/4</td>
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<td>55/2</td>
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<td>66</td>
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Title of passage:  
Start Date:  

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Title of passage:  
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Title of passage:  
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Title of passage:  
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FAMILIES BUILDING BETTER READERS™
Goal: Increase the number of sight words your child can read quickly and easily.

*Sight words are ones that make up 50-80% of everyday conversation or reading (such as “the”, “because”, or “want”). When a child knows a word by “sight,” it means he or she can read that word quickly and without having to think about it or sound it out. Knowing a lot of sight words allows your child to read smoothly and evenly so he or she can focus on reading for understanding rather than struggling to figure out individual words.*

Activity: In this activity you will be making and using flash cards to help your child learn sight words through a motivational game. Flash cards can also be used to help your child commit vocabulary words, spelling words, math facts, and other such items to memory.

Supplies:
- Blank index cards
- Marker
- Word list appropriate for your child
- Pre-printed flash card set (we’ve included this set to get you started)

What to Do...

1. **Start with a list of words that your child needs to work on.**
   Ask for a list from his or her teacher, use words found in the sight word list included with this blueprint, or use words you’ve noted your child doesn’t know well when doing other reading activities.

2. **Print each word on a separate index card in a way so it resembles book print.**

3. **Tell your child you will be playing a game called “Three Strikes—You Win.”**
   Unlike baseball, in this game when a player gets three strikes, the player is a winner. Every time your child reads a word correctly, you will put a strike (an “x”) on the back of that word card. Once a word card has three strikes, your child wins that card, and it is removed from the deck.

4. **Hold a stack of cards up to your child.**
   Don’t make the stack too thick or it may overwhelm your child (rule of thumb - your child should be able to go through entire stack in just a few minutes). Ask your child to read the word that faces him or her.
   - If your child can’t read the word, help him or her sound it out or, if it doesn’t sound out, look for a way to remember it. Move the card to the back of the stack.
   - If your child reads the word, but does so with difficulty (i.e. takes longer than three seconds), praise him or her for the success and move the card to the back of the stack.
   - If your child reads the word quickly and easily, mark an “x” on the back of the card. Tell your child that’s “one strike” and all he or she needs is two more strikes to win.

5. **Continue working with your flash card deck in this manner.**
   When you are finished going through the entire deck, go back through the word cards that your child missed and have him or her spell each one to you aloud.

6. **You can go through the card deck several times a day, but mark an “x” only once per day.**

7. **When a word card gets three “strikes” on the back, celebrate!**
   Remove that card from the deck and replace it with a new and different word card from your list.
Three Strikes, You Win! (continued)

Sight words are the most common words found in texts. If your child memorizes these words, it saves him or her the time it would take to sound them out when reading. In addition, some of these words cannot be sounded out because they do not follow the usual rules. These words must therefore be memorized.

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always  around
because  been
before  best
both  buy
Goal: Help your child understand the relationship between the sounds of spoken language and the letters that represent those sounds in writing.

When a child has a good grasp of the way letters go together to make different sounds in words, he or she can spell and sound out unfamiliar words more accurately.

Activity: In this activity you will give your child sound clues to determine what object you have hidden.

Supplies: • Interesting object(s) to hide
• Paper and pencil

What to Do...

1. **Find an interesting object to share** (calculator, prism, magnet, feather, seashell, etc.).
2. **Hide the object nearby.**
3. **Tell your child you will be playing a game together like “Hide and Seek” called “Word Mysteries.”**
   When he or she figures out the name of the hidden object based on clues you give, your child gets to seek and find the object.
4. **Tell your child the first sound in the name of the object.**
   Give one sound (like b) or one sound unit (like th) at a time. Make sure you do not add sounds on the ends of letter sounds that aren’t there (e.g., saying buh instead of simply b). Have your child guess what the hidden object could be using your first clue.
5. **Once the guess is made, ask what sound should be next if the guess is correct.**
   Try exaggerating the sounds by singing out the word so your child can hear individual sounds more easily.
6. **Next, write the correct letter(s) for the next sound in the word.**
   If the correct letter(s) matches your child’s guess, move on to the next letter. If it doesn’t match his guess, ask for a new guess of what the word might be and test the next sound in the new guess.
7. **Follow this process until the entire word is spelled out.**
   Once complete, let your child seek the object. Talk together about the object and what makes it interesting (see “Talk is Cheap and It Works” blueprint for ideas).
Here is one example of playing this game:

a. “I’m going to write the letter that makes the first sound you hear in the name of the hidden object.”
   p

b. “What might the word be?” (Child says “painting.”) “If the word is *painting*, what is the next sound you hear in that word after the *p* sound?” (Child makes the long *a* sound.) “That’s right. So I should write the letters *ai* next IF the word is painting.” (Notice that the *a* and *i* were presented together because these two letters make the next sound together - they are a sound unit.)
   pr

c. “I did not write *ai*, instead I added an *r*, so the hidden object cannot be a painting. What might the object be now that you know the first two sounds are *pr*?” (Child says “present.”)
   “If the object I have hidden is a *present*, what would the next sound be?” (Child makes a short *e* sound.) “Okay, so if the object is a *present*, I’ll need to write an *e*, let’s test that one out.”
   pri

d. “Since I did not add an *e*, we now know the object cannot be a *present*.”

e. Continue in this way until the word prism is completely spelled out. “You’ve figured out the hidden object is a *prism*. I’ll give you the clues of ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ to help you find it.” (Child finds the prism.) “Let’s take a closer look. See how the prism reflects all the colors of the rainbow when I hold it up to the light?” (Continue conversation about the object.)
   prism
PART THREE: EVERYDAY READING

If You See It, Read It!

Goal: Give your child practice reading real-world texts for real purposes.

Good reading material for children can be found in other places besides just books. In fact, much of the reading we do each day in the real world is not from books at all. Opportunities for your child to use reading for real-world purposes can be found in abundance during your daily routines and will motivate your child to do well in school.

Activity: In this activity your child will practice reading material other than books and textbooks. Think of all the things you often read during any given day (phonebook, recipe, advertisement, letter from a friend, food label, TV guide, road signs, etc.). When your child reads these same things in search of useful information, he or she gains an appreciation for the connection between school and the real world.

Supplies: Print you often see and use in your daily life, such as a newspaper, magazine, menu, cereal box, phonebook, etc.

What to Do... As you go through your day together, “assign” your child real-world reading tasks. You may have to show your child how to find the information he or she is seeking at first, but soon your child will be able to do it independently. A few ideas follow, but the possibilities for finding and using everyday reading materials for practice are practically unlimited.
1. What is right in front of your child’s nose most mornings?
   A cereal box.
   What are the ingredients? How many ounces are in a serving? Ask your child to read and find out. Read directions to fill out the mail-in forms for any free prizes offered.

2. What is black and white and “read” all over? A newspaper!
   Give your child real purposes for reading out of the newspaper:
   • Does he or she want to see a movie? Have your child read the movie listings, and then find and select a time you might attend.
   • Playing in a little league game this weekend? Have your child check the weather forecast.
   • What’s on television tonight? Read the TV Guide to find out.
   • You’ll both find the comic strips or funny pages entertaining. Read them together.
   • Be a role model for your child by reading things like the newspaper in front of him or her.

3. What’s good to eat at your local drive-thru?
   Let your child read the menu and order within the given budget by finding the “best deal.”

4. Want to order a pizza?
   It’s only a phone call away. Ask your child to find the number in the phonebook.

5. Have your child write and mail a letter to a friend or relative.
   Watch as he or she opens the reply letter and reads it enthusiastically.

6. Time for dinner?
   Have your child read the recipe aloud as you follow the directions. Try letting your child follow the sequential directions and with your supervision make cookies or something else yummy from an easy box mix.

7. Don’t forget a nightly bedtime story…a memory your child will treasure forever.

Notes
Talk is Cheap, and it Works

Goal: Build your child’s knowledge base and vocabulary through rich conversation.

To be able to read and understand a word in a sentence it is helpful if a child has heard that word before and has some notion of what it means. Children most often pick up words like this through conversations they have had with adults.

Activity: In this activity you will engage your child in rich conversation.

Supplies: Topics, events, objects, stories, ideas, feelings to discuss

What to Do...

Spend quality time conversing with your child every day. You can easily do this while you are going about your daily routines. Try the following strategies:

1. **Eat dinner as a family.**
   Research reveals that children who sit down at the dinner table with their families are better readers than those that don’t. What’s going on at the dinner table? Conversation. Children who regularly converse with adults are exposed to tens of thousands of more words per year than those who don’t.

2. **When conversing with your child try the following strategies:**
   - **Expand on your child’s statements.**
     Child says, “Want juice.” You rephrase and respond using more developed sentence structure, “Yes, you would like to drink some apple juice.”
   - **Describe what you are doing.**
     When talking with younger children, think of yourself as Howard Cosell, giving a play-by-play of the activities you or your child are doing: “You are stacking the blocks. You made a tower. Oh the tower tumbled down!”
   - **Describe things you see.**
     Tell what you know/understand: “Look at this tiny roly-poly. See how it balls itself up for protection?”
   - **Use vivid words for descriptions.**
     “This sugared candy is tangy but sweet.”
   - **Expose your child to correct terminology.**
     “Can you see the antennae on top of this insect’s head?”
     “Watch my measuring tape retract when I press this button.”
   - **Ask questions that require your child to think deeply.**
     “How do you think a butterfly is like a growing child?”

3. **Don’t feel badly if you don’t know all the answers to your child’s questions.**
   “I’m not sure why rainbows have different colors, let’s find a book to learn more about that together.”
Books on a Shoestring Budget

Goal: Find inexpensive and free reading materials for practice.

The idea of purchasing books for your child’s home library is wonderful but can also prove expensive. There are many places you can go to find inexpensive or free books and magazines to stock your child’s bookshelf without breaking the bank.

Activity: In this activity you will gain the resources and skills for finding good affordable reading material.

Supplies: Library card, classified section of newspaper, phone, book club flyers, etc

What to Do...

There are many places you can go for inexpensive or free reading material. Try the following suggestions:

1. Apply for a library card at your local library.
   This is your “homework” for this workshop-- Call your local library and fill in the following information:
   • Where are the nearest libraries to me?
   • How do I apply for a library card so that I can check out free books?
   • What days and times does the library offer a story hour or other special programs for my child?
   • Special Note: you may also call your child’s school library to see if any hours are open to families, and if they have any scheduled book fairs.

2. Get book deals at yard sales.
   Search for yard sales in the classified section of your newspaper that include children’s books. You can often pick up good books at very reasonable prices.
3. **Purchase books at used book stores.**

4. **Ask local professional offices for their “old” magazines.**
   Call and ask what they do with outdated magazines in their waiting rooms. Explain you are looking for good reading material for your child and offer to pick up their unwanted magazines when it is convenient.

5. **Consider buying from a book club.**
   Consider purchasing books from the different book club flyers sent home by your child’s teacher. The prices for books offered in these flyers are typically much lower than what you will find them for in book stores.

6. **Reading materials “to go.”**
   Stop by fast-food places or restaurants to pick up children’s menus that feature reading games.

7. **Ask a teacher.**
   Ask your child’s teacher for any free materials that he or she may receive that promote family literacy.

8. **Give the lifelong gift of reading.**
   Ask relatives to purchase a book instead of a toy next time they want to give your child a gift. The gift of reading lasts a lifetime while toys often end up in the bottom of a closet.

9. **Brainstorm.**
   What are some of your own ideas for finding free or inexpensive reading materials?

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**Families Building Better Readers**
Goal: Learn how to select high-interest reading material to motivate even the most reluctant readers.

It is sometimes difficult to motivate children to practice reading. When you make sure your child has reading material available on topics he or she especially enjoys, wanting to practice reading becomes a given.

Activity: In this activity you will determine your child’s specific interests by asking a series of questions. You will also take notes about books presented that you think may interest your child.

Supplies: • List of questions (included below)
• Books of high interest to your child

What to Do...

1. Determine what topics interest your child.
   Ask your child the questions listed below. Use his or her answers to help you select books that your child will find the most appealing.
   • What do you know a lot about?
   • What do you want to learn more about?
   • What kinds of books or magazines or other reading material do you enjoy reading most? Why?
   • If you could choose only three books from the library what would they be about? Why those topics?
   • What book topics do you least enjoy? Why?

2. Periodically ask the same set of questions to see if his or her areas of interest have changed.
   If they have, find new reading materials to match your child’s ever-changing new interests.

3. Know what books are popular with kids.
   Use the space below to make notes about books presented during this workshop that may interest your child.

Book List

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F A M I L I E S  B U I L D I N G  B E T T E R  R E A D E R S™
Goal: Learn how to model for children what effective readers do through interactive read-alouds.

The National Reading Panel states that the single best predictor of children’s eventual success in reading is how often their parents read to them. Children learn a lot about what effective readers do from watching and listening to adults read to and with them.

Activity: In this activity you will model effective reading practices while reading aloud to your child. Good readers actively think about what they read. They sometimes pause to summarize what they have read, ask themselves questions, make predictions, and test those predictions as they read further along. They also read with expression and use their imaginations to make story lines more vivid.

Supplies: Appealing non-fiction and fiction books that can be on a higher level than your child can read alone.

What to Do...

1. Select a good book from recommended booklists. See our list online by going to www.justreadflorida.org and clicking on the Families Building Better Readers™ link. You can also ask your librarian or your child’s teacher for a suggestion. Preview the book ahead of time so you can plan how you will make the reading interactive.

2. Talk about what you will be reading before you begin the book.

3. Introduce the book by reading the title and author’s name. Note details about the cover illustration. Ask your child to predict (not guess) what the story might be about based on the title and picture.

4. Read the book at a fairly quick pace using a lot of expression. For example, when the story becomes serious, slow down and read thoughtfully. When something funny happens, laugh. Make up interesting voices for each of the characters. This keeps your child’s attention and teaches your child to visualize what is read in the mind - a strategy effective readers use to improve understanding.

5. Explain unfamiliar words. When you come across a word your child may not know, pause briefly to explain. Challenge your child to use the pictures on the page or other words in the surrounding sentence(s) to figure out what the word may mean.

6. Help your child connect to the story. Point out interests, characteristics, or feelings he or she may share with the characters.
Model Read-Alouds (continued)

7. **Do stop and ask questions, but don’t go overboard.** Use places in the story where there is a natural pause to stop and ask your child questions that will guide him or her toward understanding. Point out clues that can be used from what you’ve read so far that might be helpful in making predictions (not guesses).

8. **Ask your child to participate in the reading in some way.** You may ask your child to do things like read a certain character’s lines or read all the repetitive parts of the story (e.g., word phrases that occur again and again such as, “Run, run as fast as you can... you can’t catch me I’m the Gingerbread Man!”).

9. **After you have finished the story, review.** Flip back through the pages and talk about what you read together. Talk about interesting things you learned or questions your child may have or ones that are left unanswered by the author. Give your child the opportunity to retell the story or parts of the story using his or her own words.

10. **Extend the reading experience.** Relate the reading to your daily lives in some way. You might cook food related to the story, talk with someone who knows more about the subject, do a related art project, or write a pretend letter to one of the characters.

**Apply what you’ve learned!**

Parents- You’ll have a chance to show off what you’ve learned during this workshop. At the end of this workshop, you’ll watch a trainer do a read-aloud demonstration. During that demonstration, we challenge you to identify all ten tips for reading aloud listed in the Model Read-Alouds blueprint.

Here’s some information on the book that you and your children will enjoy during this final activity: **Sam’s Sandwich** by David Pelham. Synopsis - Sam makes his sister a sandwich. His sister Samantha offers him a bite, but Sam knows something Samantha doesn’t know; he’s put some unusual ingredients inside. Do you think Sam will take a bite?

For our complete list of great read-aloud books, visit our website at [www.justreadflorida.org](http://www.justreadflorida.org).

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