

A Brief Summary of James Patterson Literacy Challenge Activities

Current literacy outcomes in many of the schools in Florida are unacceptable. Too many children fail to reach even basic levels of reading proficiency. For the James Patterson Literacy Challenge, the University of Florida Literacy Initiative (UFLI) is using two main approaches to improving literacy outcomes for children in Florida. The first addresses the problem broadly by reaching as many teachers as possible through web-based professional development. The second addresses the problem deeply by providing intensive, school-based professional development for some of the state's lowest performing schools and creating a model that can be replicated at other schools.

Online Professional Development

The UF College of Education is one of the nation's leaders in online education. We are capitalizing on this to reach teachers all over Florida with web-based resources.

In partnership with UF's Lastinger Center for Learning, we are developing a cutting-edge, web-based professional development platform that will be accessible to teachers across Florida and beyond. Online modules will present up-to-date research, provide video models of exemplary instruction, and provide a forum in which teachers can receive feedback about their practice, share their ideas, and celebrate their successes.

Through UF's graduate certificate in dyslexia, we offer a sequence of online courses to teach educators how to address the needs of their students with the most significant reading difficulties. Selected teachers at Patterson Challenge Schools will receive scholarships to participate.

School-Based Professional Development

We are working intensively with some of Florida's lowest performing schools to transform their literacy culture and instructional practices to improve student outcomes. This work begins by guiding each school through a comprehensive self study to identify its strengths and needs. Using data from the self study, we will design a literacy acceleration plan and provide comprehensive professional development that is customized to address the context and needs of each participating school.

The school-based work will include a summer literacy academy for all teachers from participating schools within a district. During each academy, teachers from the various schools will work with other teachers from the same grade level to learn effective practices. They will then work across grade levels in their school to design a cohesive plan for improving literacy outcomes.

In partnership with P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School, we have created an intensive summer reading intervention program for struggling students that also provides teachers an opportunity to learn and practice evidence-based instructional methods. We will replicate this model in Patterson Challenge Schools.