

Funding Request for Winning Reading Boost



Cross & Anvil Human Services
1201 7th Ave S., St Petersburg, FL 33705

in partnership with



Winning Reading Boost

Overview

Cross and Anvil Human Services, in partnership with the University of Florida Lastinger Center, invites the Pinellas County Commissioners to provide a \$92,000 grant to fund a proven, research-based reading program that has the potential to transform the lives of children in St. Petersburg and to serve as a state and national model site for demonstrating community solutions for ensuring that vulnerable children can master reading and in so doing put themselves on the pathway to success in school and in life.

The Winning Reading Boost model demonstration site, based in south St. Petersburg, will target 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students in St. Petersburg who are struggling in school because they have not yet learned to read. To ensure that it is implemented exactly as designed, the University of Florida selects, trains and certifies a cadre of energetic and passionate educators to deliver Winning Reading Boost in a highly engaging, motivating, fun and powerful learning experience that results in children becoming successful readers after completing the 36-step, 90-day program.

Winning Reading Boost is much more than a curricula or program. Beyond helping children to become fluent readers, Winning Reading Boost makes reading fun, enjoyable and thrilling – and most importantly, it brings parents and communities along for the ride. This patented, highly structured program has research-based design elements that interact to ensure student success.

Program Components

- Builds fluent, independent readers through a unique 90-day, 36-step learning-to-read curriculum built on carefully sequenced, systematic, and explicit phonics instruction.
- Incorporates the research-based principles of reading instruction as required by Core Knowledge including phonemic awareness and phonological awareness, systematic, explicit phonics instruction, vocabulary development, fluency and oral reading skills, and reading comprehension strategies.
- Aligns to current research on brain function, language acquisition, and reading, as well as scientific research clearly stating that systematic and explicit phonics instruction is the most effective way to encourage growth in reading.
- Combines the best teaching practices supported by current research on brain function, language acquisition, and reading.
- Provides an encouraging learning environment that engages every learning style and stimulates brain activity.
- Delights students with sing-alongs, games, charts, and appealing stories that the reader is able to read independently.
- Draws upon the research and demonstrated success of using music in reading and spelling skill development to produce reading success for learners.
- Infuses powerful, short learning bursts into a competency and mastery-based curriculum where all children successfully progress along the learning continuum.
- Embeds active community and parent engagement within the Winning Reading Boost experience.
- Affirms, recognizes and honors culture and racial equity.
- Launches teams and utilizes metaphor to reimagine learning to read as a stimulating, motivating, engaging, energetic and profoundly rewarding 90-day Winning Reading Boost Race Team that produces successful outcomes for all of those engaged in the learning journey.
- Provides the community with a powerful call to action and opportunity to participate in a Winning Reading Boost Race Team where volunteers and parents join racers (learners), coaches (instructors), boosters (community volunteer instructors and parents) and sponsors (business partners) in a 90-day race to break the code (decode) to reading fluency.
- Utilizes cutting-edge technology to track individual and team progress and support the learning environment.

Breaking the Code

Too many children in St. Petersburg and Florida are failing to learn to read through no fault of

their own. Nationally, only 36% of fourth-grade students perform at or above proficient in the NAEP reading assessment; schools in St. Petersburg have even poorer results that doom children to failure in school and that severely limit their success in life.

Learning to read is a complex endeavor requiring instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. While instruction in each area is important for success in reading, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction contribute most to the development of decoding, and this is especially true for students who are struggling to learn how to read. The ultimate goal of reading is to comprehend. In order to achieve this goal, children must be able to decode words; they must be able to look at the words and read them accurately. In order to become effective readers who can decode and comprehend text, children need a firm foundation in phonological awareness and phonics instruction. Decoding ability is an early and strong predictor of future success in reading. Winning Reading Boost excels at helping children decode, turning these students into fluent readers.

An estimated 1 in 5 students have some degree of dyslexia. This doesn't mean that they see letters or words backward, as is commonly assumed. It means that they have difficulty processing the sounds in spoken language and difficulty connecting those sounds with letters. Most teachers are ill-equipped to address this problem. Effective intervention requires extensive and systematic practice manipulating sounds using a multisensory approach that is the foundation of Winning Reading Boost. This involves simultaneous engagement of visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile neural pathways – all critical elements of Winning Reading Boost. Music enhances learning and retention, so the songs in Winning Reading Boost are a critical component to producing fluent readers. The music helps students remember the sounds and skills they are learning in ways that do not happen with other programs. Winning Reading Boost uses body-coda blending, rather than onset-rime blending like most other programs. The onset of a syllable includes any sounds before the vowel (the /s/ in 'sit' or the /fl/ in flap), and the rime includes the vowel and everything after it (the /an/ in 'can' or the /ash/ in 'splash'). The body of a syllable includes the initial sound and the vowel (/si/ in 'sit' or /fla/ in flap), and the coda is the final sound (/n/ in 'can' or /sh/ in splash). Struggling readers tend to be far more successful when blending the body and the coda as opposed to blending the onset and the rime. Drawing on the science of teaching reading, Winning Reading Boost incorporates body-coda blending into its design.

Reading success is generally measured by how well children perform on tests of reading comprehension, but lack of comprehension is seldom due to lack of comprehension strategies. Unfortunately, this is where most intervention focuses during the intermediate and secondary grades. Instead, more often than not, students struggle to comprehend text because they can't read the words on the page accurately or automatically. Winning Reading Boost is the needed intervention that helps them develop in these areas of deficiency. Ultimately, Winning Reading Boost helps children learn how to read fluently by decoding words, and in so doing, break the code to reading.



Program Service Area, Implementation and Evaluation

Winning Reading Boost will be delivered in an after-school setting in south St. Petersburg and will target struggling readers from the schools described in the Failure Factory articles. As a delivery, training and demonstration site, the program will directly serve 30 children who have not learned how to read while also providing a venue for phonics training for educators. This groundbreaking project will demonstrate that even the most struggling readers can learn how to read successfully. In so doing, the program will serve as a new model for transforming reading instruction in Pinellas County and beyond.

The program will be coordinated by Cross and Anvil Human Services. In that capacity, Cross and Anvil will oversee the recruitment of teachers, selection of students, engagement of parents and volunteers, and be engaged in all facets of program implementation. The University of Florida Lastinger Center will be a full partner in the project and will provide all curriculum resources, program evaluation and lead educator training activities.

St. Petersburg College's Midtown campus, conveniently located in close proximity to many of the project's schools, will serve as one of the community hubs of activity, providing classroom space and other services as needed.

Budget

Item	Cost
<u>Personnel</u>	
1 lead instructor, 3 instructors	\$54,450
1 volunteer coordinator	
1 teacher trainer	
<u>Project Coordination</u>	
Cross and Anvil Human Services	\$17,500
<u>Contracted Services</u>	
University of Florida (curriculum materials, training, evaluation)	\$14,500
<u>Other Expenses</u>	\$15,550
Food, student incentives, field-trips, licensing fees, Books, background screening for volunteers	
<u>Transportation</u>	\$13,000
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$115,000

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
Winning Reading Boost Assessment Results

The University of Florida Lastinger Center was contacted by St. Petersburg and state education leaders requesting immediate support and engagement in the state's 5 most challenging schools which were all located in south Pinellas County. After initial discussions, it became clear that reading was the top priority for struggling learners, a need that aligned well with the UF Lastinger Center expertise as it prepared to pilot the Winning Reading Boost program. Thanks to the stalwart leadership of Pastor Clarence Williams (Greater Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church) and Dr. Kevin Gordon (St. Petersburg College), and with the support and encouragement of state government leaders, a partnership was established to offer Winning Reading Boost to the lowest performing children at a custom-developed after school program at Pastor William's church.

Winning Reading Boost targets 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students who have not yet learned to read. It incorporates the research-based principles of reading instruction including phonological awareness, systematic and explicit phonics instruction, fluency, and oral reading skills through its use of a multisensory, multimodal approach. Students learn from engaging with music, songs, games, charts, and appealing stories that are tailored to older students.

In order to explore the effects of the Winning Reading program, students' skills in the areas of decoding, fluency, and comprehension were assessed before and after participation in the intervention. The assessment team was led by Dr. Holly Lane, Associate Professor at the University of Florida and literacy expert. *After only 28 days of intervention (the program is ideally 90 days), students showed remarkable improvement.* Preliminary results of the Winning Reading Boost are included for students who completed 40 hours of instruction.

- The Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE) Phonics survey is a measure of phonics and phonics related skills that have a high rate of application for reading. A threshold score for this measure, one that demonstrates the level of decoding skill necessary for reading most text, is about 150. Before the intervention, only 40% of participating students met this threshold. After the intervention, **80% met the threshold**, for an **improvement of 100%**.
- The Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) assesses students' skill at reading real words (Sight Word Efficiency subtest) and pseudowords (Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest). On this test, items get progressively more difficult. Pseudoword reading is thought to be a particularly useful measure of decoding skill because students cannot rely on their previous experience with or knowledge of the words. Research supports assessing pseudoword decoding as the best predictor of word identification. On this measure, students showed a **75% improvement** in decoding.

- An additional measure of pseudoword reading was administered and students showed a **97% increase** across simple consonant-vowel-consonant combinations (e.g., bip, mog) and more challenging combinations (e.g., tusp, moze).
- Unlike the previous word reading measures, the oral reading fluency measure assessed students' ability to read a passage of connected text accurately and automatically. Students were timed for one minute. From the first passage, before the intervention, to the last passage, after the intervention, students showed **an increase of 100%**.

In order to become effective readers who can decode and comprehend text, children need a firm foundation. Decoding ability is an early and strong predictor of future success in reading. **Winning Reading Boost excels at helping children decode more accurately and automatically, thus turning these students into fluent, confident readers.**

Our Community Partners

Pinellas County Board of Commissioners	\$92,000
Pinellas County Schools (In Kind) *	\$7,000
Cross & Anvil Support (Foundation Support)	\$11,000
St. Petersburg Collage	<u>\$5,000</u>
	\$115,000