



**Free Florida Reading Program Expands Eligibility to VPK Students
Just in Time for Back-to-School Season**

The New Worlds Reading Initiative will continue to support Florida families and children by delivering free books and reading resources directly to VPK-5th grade students this school year!



Parents and caregivers can apply for their child to participate in New Worlds Reading today!

Florida, July 19, 2023 – As the school year begins for millions of students across Florida, the UF Lastinger Center for Learning’s New Worlds Reading program is continuing its commitment to boost literacy rates by expanding program eligibility to Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) students.

In Florida’s most recent legislative session, the state-created program received bipartisan support for the program’s expansion, allowing families with children in VPK programs who are not yet making age-appropriate progress according to FAST results to apply and receive free books and reading resources.

In Florida, there are more than 861,000 eligible VPK-5th grade students not yet reading on grade level. A first-of-its-kind, statewide literacy program, New Worlds Reading was created to tackle this issue by delivering nine free books and literacy resources a year directly to the doorsteps of eligible children. Since New Worlds Reading’s launch in December 2021, more than 3.7 million books have shipped to 259,980 children across the state.

VPK students in Florida who are not making age-appropriate progress according to FAST results and K-5th grade students who are not yet reading on grade level in a public or district-sponsored charter school are eligible to apply for New Worlds Reading today.

"We're thrilled that New Worlds Reading has grown to support even more Florida kids," said Dr. Shaunté Duggins, Associate Director for the New Worlds Reading Initiative. "At New Worlds Reading, we are committed to fostering a love for learning, connecting families and communities, and sharing the magic of reading with students across the state. We're excited to partner with eligible students and their families to provide support!"

New Worlds Reading delivers free books to students in English, Spanish, Haitian-Creole and braille, and thanks to exciting new developments, families can now select the exact sets of books they will receive this year.

"Reading has always been a challenge for my child, but New Worlds Reading has really given his reading skills a jump start. He gravitates to books that are funny, so it's been great receiving stories that make him laugh. He also gets to learn about things like nature and science," said Cecilia Masi, a New Worlds Reading parent to a 2nd grade student. "The program has helped my child build foundational reading skills that I know will help set him up not only for the next school year, but his entire life."

The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning administers the program with its selected partner Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company. The UF Lastinger Center's mission is to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and childcare. The UF Lastinger Center researches, develops, and scales equitable educational innovations for adults and children that put all learners on trajectories for lifelong success.

New Worlds Reading develops book lists in collaboration with the Florida Department of Education's Just Read! Florida office. Parents and caregivers can learn more when they visit [New Worlds Reading's website](#), or stay informed through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

About The New Worlds Reading Initiative

The New Worlds Reading Initiative is Florida's free at-home literacy program to help eligible VPK through 5th grade students in Florida to bolster literacy skills, build reading confidence, and foster a lifelong love of reading. Each month, eligible kids receive a free book tailored to their interests with resources and activities for caregivers and children to engage with books together. The UF Lastinger Center for Learning designs education solutions for children and teachers, and administers New Worlds Reading. The UF Lastinger Center has partnered with Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company. Books are selected in collaboration with the Florida Department of Education, and are available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and braille. For more information, visit newworldsreading.com.