

## **Building on Proven Success: Scaling the University of Florida - Sarasota County Schools Science of Reading Model**

### **Abstract**

Sarasota County Schools (SCS) requests \$750,000 per year for two years from the U.S. Department of Education's Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Mid-Phase Program to expand the Science of Reading (SoR) professional learning model into Grades 3-5. This initiative builds on the proven Strauss Literacy Initiative, established through a public-private partnership among SCS, the University of Florida Lastinger Center, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and the Barancik Foundation. Federal funds will be matched 1:1 by \$1.5 million in local philanthropic support to sustain the work beyond the two-year federal period.

The project will serve approximately 450 elementary teachers and 9,600 students across Sarasota County Schools, expanding the University of Florida's Science of Reading model to all Grade 3-5 classrooms. Activities include professional learning, instructional coaching, fidelity monitoring, and data-driven continuous improvement cycles designed to strengthen teacher capacity and improve student literacy outcomes.

The initiative aligns with Florida's B.E.S.T. Standards and SCS's 2030 Strategic Plan (Pillar 1: Student Success, Pillar 2: Future-Ready Learners, Pillar 3: Engaged Community). The evaluation will employ a quasi-experimental design to generate moderate-to-strong evidence of effectiveness using FAST and STAR Reading growth measures, fidelity rubrics, and teacher-efficacy surveys administered by the University of Florida Lastinger Center in partnership with the district's Research and Evaluation Department.

Expected outcomes include measurable gains in student reading proficiency, increased teacher confidence and fidelity in implementing evidence-based practices, and a sustainable district-university partnership model that contributes to research, policy, and practice for structured literacy implementation across upper elementary grades.