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## **Orlando Nonprofit's Literacy Program Drives Significant Reading Gains for Struggling Students**

*New research highlights the effectiveness of REED Charitable Foundation's Model School approach in helping students build strong reading skills, which is the single largest predictor of long-term health and success.*

**Winter Park, Florida** -- Schools that participated in an innovative literacy training and support program showed annual growth that was up to 3-times higher than the national norm, according to an independent evaluation released today.

School-based structured literacy support from Orlando nonprofit, **REED Charitable Foundation (RCF)**, led to reading gains for students in the first year, with even stronger results after two school years under the program, according to researchers from Massachusetts-based [LXD Research](#).

"By fostering an environment of ongoing professional learning and job-embedded support, RCF Model Schools appear to provide the robust support system that teachers need to enhance student achievement year after year," the evaluators wrote.

Founded in late 2019, RCF was created after a local family's search for literacy support for their son revealed a critical gap in access to science-based, structured literacy instruction. This type of instruction is essential for all children, including the 1-in-5 with dyslexia, but was largely unavailable in local schools and expensive through private tutoring. In response, RCF set out to make structured literacy training and support both financially and geographically accessible. Through its Model Schools program, RCF offers free teacher training, follow-up support, and classroom materials to schools in exchange for non-identifying data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach.

"This milestone of securing research to validate the impact of our work brings both a deep sense of pride and validation. It also shows the forward-thinking approach we've taken as an education nonprofit, knowing that evidence is key—not only because it is necessary to secure the funding needed to expand our efforts, but more importantly, because reading is essential to a child's future success and we have to use proven methods that work for the most children possible. That's why we are committed to supporting and funding this important research—because every child deserves a teacher who can confidently teach them how to read," said Jennifer Knopf, President at RCF.



The study analyzed student performance on the nationally-recognized STAR Reading Assessments at three schools served by RCF. The study reviewed scores for more than 1,600 students in Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years.

First and second graders who were in their second year with RCF achieved literacy growth that significantly exceeded national growth norms. In addition, more students met or exceeded reading proficiency goals by the end of the year, with students who started the year in urgent need of support showing annual growth that was up to 3x higher than the national norm. While this group of students is historically the most difficult to move, under the RCF Model School approach, kindergarteners who began below the 10th percentile exceeded expected growth by 78%, first graders by 198%, and second graders by 214%.

“We are deeply honored to do this work and thrilled to now have independent research affirming the transformative impact of the RCF Model School approach on literacy outcomes. This study shows that in a remarkably short period of time, this approach can create significant improvements for all students, especially those who have historically faced the greatest challenges in making reading gains. It’s simple yet powerful: when teachers receive effective training and support and are backed by strong leadership, everyone benefits—the school, the educators, the community, and most importantly, the children,” said Knopf.

Based in Winter Park, Florida, RCF works with educators using an approach informed by Orton-Gillingham, which breaks down reading and spelling into smaller skills and then builds on them over time. The nonprofit provides training, implementation support and more for educators, professionals and even homeschool groups nationwide and even globally, with their sights set on launching a fully online version in Spring 2025.

Dr. Rachel Schechter, founder of LXD Research, said the study demonstrates that RCF’s approach benefits all levels of students.

“When an organization implements evidence-based practices, educators can better target instruction, and students’ skills soar,” Schechter said.

The Lookback study is currently available for public-viewing on the [ERIC](#) repository and [ResearchGate](#).

### **About REED Charitable Foundation**

REED Charitable Foundation (RCF) is a non-profit that provides structured literacy training informed by Orton-Gillingham, along with ongoing professional coaching, comprehensive materials, and continued implementation support to help all students learn to read. Visit <https://reedcharitablefoundation.org/>.



### **About LXD Research**

Learning Experience Design (LXD) Research is an independent evaluation and research firm within Charles River Media focusing on educational programs. LXD Research specializes in research communication, efficacy study validation, and the design and execution of ESSA-aligned research studies. Visit [www.LXDResearch.com](http://www.LXDResearch.com).

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